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ABSTRACT

The basic philosophy underlying many contemporary developments in educational theory and practice is the concept of "equal opportunity" within an education system as distinct from the older concept of "equal education" for all. This research project investigated alternative educational environments that could be designed to more effectively develop the capabilities of children with special interests and talents. The report examines existing Special Interest Centres in countries such as Australia, England, the United States of America, India, and the Soviet Union, and also various selection procedures used to identify talented children. The major section of the report focusses upon six organizational designs that could be used as blueprints for organizing education for talented children. (Author)

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This Planning Report is one of a series of studies completed by Planning Services of the Education Department, Victoria.

FOREWORD

This *Planning Report* is one of a series of studies completed by Planning Services of the Education Department, Victoria.

The Schools Commission suggested the study and provided financial assistance. This in itself is significant for the staff of Planning Services, as the support provided by the Commission and the co-operative relationships that have been established between the various offices could not have been more appropriately realised than in this Report.

Assistance provided during the study by the following members of the Advisory Committee is gratefully acknowledged:

Ms. G. Morris	– Senior Education Officer, Education Unit, Zoological Gardens, Victoria.
Mr. M. O'Brien	– Director, Curriculum Services, S.A. Department of Education.
Mr. L. Parr	– Director, Victorian College of the Arts.
Mr. D. Walsh	– Schools Commission, Canberra.

At the time of publication, Dr. Jack Wood, the principal researcher, is a staff member at the Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle (N.S.W.).

Views presented in this Report are not necessarily endorsed by the Schools Commission nor the Education Department (Victoria). The Report is intended to provide a framework for further discussion.

Robin Chapman,
Director of Planning Services,
Education Department – Victoria.

27 July, 1980.

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CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter

1 INTRODUCTION
- Background to Study ... 1
- Delimitations of Study ... 3
- References ... 3

2 THE NEED TO DEVELOP SPECIAL INTERESTS AND TALENTS
- Problems in Defining Special Interests and Talents ... 4
- References ... 11

3 A SURVEY OF EXISTING SPECIAL INTEREST FACILITIES
- Some Overseas Developments ... 13
  - England ... 13
  - Soviet Union ... 14
  - Israel ... 14
  - India ... 15
  - United States ... 16
- Australia ... 17
  - Australian Capital Territory ... 17
  - Northern Territory ... 17
  - South Australia ... 17
  - Western Australia ... 20
  - Victoria ... 21
- References ... 22

4 FORMS OF ORGANISATION FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES
- Alternative 1: Establishment of Special Interest Centres within existing schools ... 24
- Alternative 2: "Out of School" Special Interest Centres ... 26
- Alternative 3: Linkage System between Educational Organisations at Different Levels ... 28
- Alternative 4: Government Funding to Community Organisations to develop Special Interests ... 28
- Alternative 5: Other Private Enterprise/Government Co-operation to Establish Special Interest Centres ... 30
- Alternative 6: Private Enterprise Control of Special Interest Centres ... 32

5 STUDENT SELECTION PROCEDURES
- Problems of Measurement ... 33
- Identification of Special Interests and Talents ... 33

Nominations 33
Screening Techniques 33
Case Histories 33
Testing Procedures 34
References 37

6 STAFFING AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES
Staffing Special Interest Centres 38
Staffing Problems 38
Some Alternative Solutions 38
Control Structures for Special Interest Centres 40
State Level 40
Federal Level 41

7 FUNDING SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES
Sources of Funding 43
Levels of Funding 43

8 SUMMARY OF PROPOSITIONS 46

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	COMMUNITY RECREATION PROJECTS NEEDED FIRST IN RANK ORDER	6
2	POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES	10

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	MODEL FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN A SPECIAL LANGUAGE SCHOOL	18
2	CENTRALISED "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE	23
3	DECENTRALISED "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE	25
4	SHARED-USE "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE	25
5	"OUT OF SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE	27
6	EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATION LINKAGE SYSTEM	28
7	GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS	29
8	PRIVATE/GOVERNMENT CONSORTIUM TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE	30
9	COMPLETE GOVERNMENT SECTOR CONTROL OF PRIVATE SECTOR OPERATION	31
10	PRIVATE ENTERPRISE CONTROL OF SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES	32
11	MINIMUM CRITERIA JUDGED IMPORTANT OR ESSENTIAL FOR IDENTIFYING TALENTED CHILDREN	35

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it."

John Stuart Mill, ON LIBERTY, Ch. 5.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1. The basic philosophy underlying many contemporary developments in educational theory and practice is the concept of "equal opportunity" within our education system as distinct from the older concept of "equal education" for all. During the 1970's schools have begun to respond to such developments in educational thought, and have sought to make better provision for the needs of individuals. As a result, the traditional curriculum has undergone quite radical modification with programs in areas such as computing science and environmental studies, programs for students with learning disabilities, programs for gifted students and so on. Consistent with this philosophy the Schools Commission has sought to promote the search for more effective ways of catering better for the special needs of children who in a conventional school situation may be prevented from achieving the fullest development of their capabilities.

   1.1 The need for alternative forms of educational environment has long been recognised, but the need for alternatives may be even more important when the demands of students who require some form of special education are being considered, in this instance those students with special interests or special talents. Similarly, the need for curriculum reform may be more pressing than before. This viewpoint was recognised by the Schools Commission in its Report for the Triennium 1976-78 (1975:106):

   > *"Allied to the tendency to broaden the range of learning activities is an implied reassessment of the status usually allotted to each section of the curriculum and to the traditions which have virtually excluded some types of activity – for example, dancing – from many schools. Partly this may represent a recognition of the wider role of the school; partly a response to changing values in the society, but perhaps mainly a desire to provide better for the different needs of individuals. The acceptance of a close relationship between interest and aptitude and the importance of both in achieving success in learning have led to a search for ways to enrich the curriculum."*

   1.2 Attempts have been made to reassess curriculum provision for students as the Schools Commission report illustrates (1975:105):

   > *"One set of responses to the new pressures and demands on the school . . . takes the form of exploration of the traditional structures of the school and alternative institutional forms. There is a tendency to re-examine traditional ways of dividing time, space, people, resources or knowledge – the internal structures which to such a large extent determine the limits of action within the school. There are, for example, attempts to evolve structures which will permit a greater variety of groupings of students, greater attention to individual differences and increased choice in learning activities . . . There is a general tendency to break down both the social and the physical boundaries which traditionally have surrounded the school and limited its range of activities and a greater willingness to view society itself as a learning environment for school activities."*

   But even within large comprehensive high schools the range of opportunities which can be made available to cater for the individual needs of students is limited. Problems arise in fields such as music and dance where considerable time must be spent by the students at a comparatively early age to acquire a particular skill. If the potential of such students is to be fully developed it is essential that they acquire the necessary physical development and discipline, while still young, from professionals with high expertise. Similarly, for intellectually gifted students the traditional curriculum is often inadequate to provide enough learning experiences and challenges to develop their talents to the full. The Schools Commission believes that just as it is essential to provide opportunities for children with learning disabilities, so should provision be made for these more talented students within an educational system.

1.3 Within the various State education systems many students have special interests that are not adequately catered for within the conventional program particularly in such areas as dance, visual and performing arts, environmental education, agricultural education, languages, sport and electronics. Some attempts have been made to provide opportunities for such students at two levels. First, attempts at curriculum extension as in Media Centres, Zoo Education Units, and special agricultural high schools in various States, provide opportunities for students who demonstrate a special interest in pursuing studies related to these fields. (In the case of agricultural high schools, students gain admission to such programs on the basis of special interest in such areas. The admission criterion is often only the successful completion of the previous year's general schooling, although in some cases additional criteria may be used, such as the potential for employment upon completion of studies in a specific area.) Secondly, some provision for special talents as well as interests has been undertaken in States such as South Australia and Western Australia where highly skilled staff and specialised facilities are utilised to enrich the learning experiences of interested students who have strong motivation and high aptitude for intensive development. In this way specialist staff and resources can be grouped to best effect, and these interested students with "special talents" may achieve higher standards of excellence.

1.4 So, Special Interest Centres may provide enriched educational opportunities for students with interests and aptitudes that have traditionally been inadequately catered for. Special Interest Centres providing opportunities for students with talent and motivation in the expressive arts may be seen as a sub-set of the broader concept of providing opportunities for students with interests and talents in all fields.

PROPOSITION 1:

Some special provision should be made within the various State education systems to provide opportunities for students with special interests and special talents. Such provision may involve the development of new facilities or the rationalisation of existing facilities.

1.5 Thus, Special Interest Centres may provide opportunities for both talented and interested students. The Schools Commission believes that Special Interest Centres should cater for students with different levels of ability, of all ages and from all socio-economic groups. These centres would be open to all students who demonstrate an interest in a particular activity and not only for gifted children. Such centres should not be restricted to traditional "high culture" but should make provision for talent expressed over a wide range of activities. In its Report for the Triennium 1976-78 the Schools Commission (1975:1078) recommended financial support for a number of Special Interest Centres throughout Australia. Such Centres would be organised to provide additional specialised schooling for students showing interest or having specialised skills or knowledge, in certain fields. Two possible organisational designs were cited:

(a) High schools designated as special purpose schools for a particular interest (e.g. music, ballet or drama).

(b) Special Interest Centres common to several schools in a locality.

A number of other approaches to the establishment of Special Interest Centres are feasible and these will be outlined in Chapter 4.

1.6 It is important to emphasise that the concept of Special Interest Centres is not new, as schools for children having special talents or interests are well established in other countries. The High School of Music and the Arts associated with the Lincoln Centre in New York, the Royal Ballet School in London, the Yehudi Menuhin Music School in England and the Russian School for Mathematicians in Siberia are all eminent examples of Special Interest Centres established in the form of Special Purpose Schools.

Within Australia examples of Special Interest Centres can also be cited. The Conservatorium High School in New South Wales offers music studies to professional standards for students in Forms 1-6 concurrently with general secondary education. Similarly, in South Australia, specialist schools have been developed in the areas of language, music, agriculture and dance education. In Western Australia specialist centres have been developed for art and crafts, dance, agriculture, media studies and languages. A more detailed examination of Special Interest Centres in Australia and overseas is presented in Chapter 3.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

(a) This study represents an initial step in developing an understanding of many of the complex problems associated with providing educational opportunities for students with special interest and talents.

(b) At this stage emphasis is upon the feasibility of establishing Special Interest Centres to develop students' talents. Because of this focus, this study provides a macro-view of many of the issues relating to the development of such Centres, but it is envisaged that further discussion and micro-analysis would be essential before any development policies in this field are implemented.

(c) Because of the time constraint involved in this study it is not possible to examine all attempts to provide educational opportunities for students with special interests and talents across Australia. Therefore, a sample of projects has been investigated and discussed in Chapter 3.

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Chapter 2

THE NEED TO DEVELOP SPECIAL INTERESTS AND TALENTS

"Genius does what it must, and Talent does what it can."

Owen Meredith

PROBLEMS IN DEFINING SPECIAL INTERESTS AND TALENTS

2 There is no simple means of conceptualising or defining special interest or special talent. Few definitions of "interest" can be found in the literature. On the other hand the literature is full with descriptions of "talented" or "gifted" children although there is a marked lack of agreement among experts concerning any one acceptable definition. The following examples serve to illustrate this diversity of opinion:

U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION – from the report to Congress on *Education of the Gifted and Talented – 1972*

"Gifted and talented children and youth are those identified at the pre-school, elementary or secondary level as (i) possessing demonstrated or potential intellectual, creative, or specific academic abilities, or leadership capability, or talent in the performing or visual arts, and (ii) needing differentiated education or services beyond those being provided by the regular school system to the average student in order to realise these potentialities."

NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – Report of the Committee enquiring into *The Education of the Talented Child – 1977*.

"Talented students are an atypical group possessing exceptional abilities and capable of outstanding performance."

GEORGIA – U.S.A.

"Gifted and talented children and youth are those students whose measured mental ability as determined by a standardised intelligence test and observational criteria, places them in approximately the upper 3 to 5 per cent of the general school population, or are those students who have manifested exceptional ability or unique potential in one or more of the visual or performing arts."

2.1 However, although there is no real agreement on any one definition of talent, there is a trend to broaden the concept of it from the traditional high I.Q. rating and accelerated achievement scores to include creativity and specific abilities. Many different perspectives have been adopted by researchers attempting to define talent. Some attempt to differentiate between intellectual talent as opposed to other forms of talent, such as creative talent. These divergent conceptualisations of talent were emphasised in a recent study on gifted children in New South Wales (1977:4):

"Many see intelligence as the common characteristic of all talented children and therefore stress the importance of mental test scores in the identification procedure. Particularly over recent years, however, concern has been expressed that these tests fail to identify some categories of the talented, for instance the highly creative."

In addition, the New South Wales report on talented children (1977:4) noted that many of the definitions of talent which are currently utilised by other educational systems display a variety of emphases:

"Some maintain performance and potential as criteria for talent, while others hold that performance alone should be the criterion and that a highly intellectual non-performer is not talented. A number of definitions of talent stress an economic and social requirement in that the performance of the talented must have potential value to society or constitute a worthwhile endeavour."

Further problems arise because of the cultural assumptions inherent in any definition. Renz and Christopoulos (1968) said:

"When one uses the term 'gifted' or 'talented', it should be understood that the referents of such terms are determined by the prevailing culture. In view of the multiplicity of behaviours of which man is capable, the theoretical number of 'gifted' or 'talented' categories is infinite. Each culture or sub-culture lays down, within the framework of its own value systems, those

syndromes of behaviour which are acceptable and/or those in which it will allow gifted behaviour to be manifested."

2.2 It is for the reasons outlined above that this report does not attempt to offer a specific definition of special interest or talent. Rather a more general statement is used to outline the concept. The conventional educational structure is founded on an assumption that secondary education is general and non-specialist and that formal education for special interests or talents outside the conventional curriculum is traditionally accounted for in post-secondary education. However, at the pre-tertiary level there are many students who have exceptional interests and talents in a diverse number of fields, and many of these abilities are inadequately provided for in the conventional education program. Thus, it can be argued that just as it is necessary to make special provision for those who encounter difficulties within the traditional school environment, so additional provision should be made for students who display special interests or who have the potential to achieve a high standard of excellence in a particular field.

To prescribe definitions for such abilities, using terms such as "talent" or "interest", is difficult and often misleading.

For example, the concept of special interest or talent is commonly restricted to a discussion of abilities relating to the expressive arts. However, this is a very inadequate usage and the concept of Special Interest Centres is based on a philosophy that talented students can be found in all fields, and that it is equally as appropriate to conceive of a talented student in electronics or mathematics as it is to discuss the talents of students in music or other creative arts.

2.3 Thus, the models of Special Interest Centres that are designed to provide opportunities for students with special talents and high aptitudes in a given field represent one possible approach to the establishment of such centres. Interested and talented students exist in all fields of endeavour, and institutions that do not have the specialist staff and facilities to develop these interests may assist in the identification of interested students for admission to other Special Interest Centres that offer an enriched environment to achieve higher standards of excellence in a given field.

It would be essential to develop appropriate guidelines for teachers within the State systems to assist them in the identification of interested and talented children. Some possible procedures are discussed in Chapter 5.

PROPOSITION 2:

Interests and talents exist in all fields of endeavour. This broad philosophy should provide the basis for determining priorities in the development of Special Interest Centres at central, state and regional levels.

PROPOSITION 3:

Institutions that do not have the specialist staff and facilities to develop special interests and talents may serve as catchment areas for the identification of students with such abilities.

PROPOSITION 4:

Guidelines should be developed at the State level to assist teachers in the identification of children with special interests and talents in various fields.

2.4 Examples are readily available to support the view that many special interests and talents are inadequately catered for within the traditional curriculum. Within the field of dance, experts point out that for physiological reasons dancers need to begin serious training at an early age if they desire to achieve professional excellence. At the age of 18 a dancer is normally ready to enter upon a performing career which will probably not extend beyond the age of 35. This necessitates that dancers' professional training be undertaken at an age when most of their peer group are qualifying for entrance to various tertiary institutions. Thus, Parr (1977:2) notes:

"Since the conventional pattern does not accommodate this circumstance, dance education has had to proceed as best it can outside it. Thus the Australian Ballet School – the premier school for dancers in Australia – recruits students at the age of 15 when they can voluntarily abandon secondary education and with it any prospect of entry to tertiary education (some do continue general secondary education by correspondence). The consequences are that:

1. *Dancers are not as well-educated as other members of the community.*
2. *Dancers cannot qualify for entry to a course of teacher training (there are almost no qualified teachers of dance in state education departments).*
3. *Students who – after all – find that they are not going to become successful dancers cannot easily move into another profession.*
4. *Dancers whose performing careers have ended cannot easily qualify for retraining."*

Dance is a fairly unusual case in that few States make provision for dance education. However in some States such as Western Australia, dance education has been included in the curriculum in some special schools, and in South Australia and Victoria some efforts are underway.

2.5 Similarly, within the field of music education the conventional school program does not always offer adequate challenges to students with special talents. Music may be better served than many of the other creative arts, because music teachers do provide some musical training within secondary schools, and students may continue into tertiary music studies. However, in many States, such as Victoria, there is an acute shortage of qualified music teachers, and thus many interested and talented children do not receive the instrumental training they need where and when they need it. Furthermore, many of these music teachers are employed on an itinerant basis and provide part-time assistance across a number of schools. Thus, the most capable students do not have access to advanced training when they are intellectually and physically ready for it and such training is not available until tertiary studies are undertaken.

2.6 The need for special interest education has also been expressed in many other countries. Quilter (1977:4) commenting on the need for special educational provision for musically talented children in England noted:

> *"The need to provide for the education of children specially gifted in music has gradually come to be recognised in this country. It is now clearly understood that provision cannot be left until young people have reached the age of performers' courses at conservatories if those from varying social backgrounds are to be given something approaching equal opportunity. Gifts must be identified early which, for string players, means by the age of 10. A proper regime of disciplined training must be provided to allow these gifts to mature."*

In addition, Quilter (1977:4-8) stated that in England the mention of special aptitude in music in the 1960 Martin report was an indication of the growing interest in this subject. This report suggested categories of assistance with boarding education, a view which was reinforced by the Public Schools' Commission First Report in 1968 which proposed the setting up of academies for this purpose. The Calouste Gulbenkian Report, "Making Musicians" and the 1970 Peacock Report, "Orchestral Resources", for the Arts Council both reiterated the need for proper early training of instrumental musicians if international standing were to be nurtured in England.

2.7 Further evidence to support the need for greater emphasis on musical talent is presented in an Australian report from the Department of Tourism and Recreation (1975:30) which examined the need for community recreation projects. Across all age groups centres for rock groups, bands, orchestras and learning instruments achieved the second highest score on the sum of all preferences. A summary of their findings is presented in Table 1. Although this study was not deliberately focusing upon the needs of children with special interests and talents it does serve to illustrate the diverse range of interests identified by students themselves.

Table 1

COMMUNITY RECREATION PROJECTS NEEDED FIRST IN RANK ORDER

Source: 1975 Department of Tourism and Recreation *Youth Say Project. The recreational priorities of Australian Young People*, Australian Government Publishing Service.

12-14 years (82 groups)	Max. Score 246	15-17 years (74 groups)	Max. Score 222	18-20 years (84 groups)	Max. Score 252
An old building young people can run the way they want	104	A regular dance	104	Developing school facilities for community use out of school hours	99
Tracks with mini-bikes, go-karts, motor bikes, old cars, etc.	96	An old building young people can run the way they want	96	Coffee shop meeting place	83
A regular dance	94	Music centres for rock groups, bands, orchestra, learning instruments	95	An old building young people can run the way they want	81
12-14 years (82 groups)	Max. Score 246	15-17 years (74 groups)	Max. Score 222	18-20 years (84 groups)	Max. Score 252
Music centres for rock groups, bands, orchestra, learning instruments	74	A big block of ground or bush young people can organise the way they want	68	Music centres for rock groups, bands, orchestra, learning instruments	69
A big block of ground or bush young people can organise the way they want	73	Coffee shop meeting place	59	A big block of ground or bush young people can organise the way they want	69
Indoor gymnastics and sports	66	Tracks with mini-bikes, go-karts, motor bikes, old cars, etc.	54	A regular dance	68
Bush-walking, camping and adventure activities	66	Developing school facilities for community use out of school hours	53	An all ages community centre	68
Coffee shop meeting place	57	Pictures, plays, concerts, theatre	49	Bushwalking, camping and adventure activities	51
Grounds and clubrooms for team sports	32	A hobbies, arts and crafts centre with instructors	47	A hobbies, arts and crafts centre with instructors	48
Pictures, plays, concerts, theatre	32	Indoor gymnastics and sports	46	Pictures, plays, concerts, theatre	48
A hobbies, arts and crafts centre with instructors	30	Bush-walking, camping and adventure activities	35	Indoor gymnastics and sports	45
Swimming activities	30	An all ages community centre	22	Tracks with mini-bikes, go-karts, motor bikes, old cars, etc.	44
Developing school facilities for community use out of school hours	27	Grounds and clubrooms for team sports	18	Meeting rooms for clubs, societies, small groups	26
An all ages community centre	18	Swimming activities	16	Grounds and clubrooms for team sports	15
Meeting rooms for clubs, societies, small groups	15	Meeting rooms for clubs, societies, small groups	7	Swimming activities	4
Uniformed groups, scouts, guides, brigades, etc.	9	Uniformed groups, scouts, guides brigades, etc.	0	Uniformed groups, scouts, guides, brigades, etc.	1

The maximum possible score any one item could achieve would require that item to be given first preference (i.e. score of 3 points) by every group.

2.8 The need to foster the special interests and talents of students in fields such as music is generally recognised in most States of Australia, but different philosophies have been expounded regarding the direction and emphasis that curriculum development should follow. For example, within the area of the performing arts two divergent philosophies can be identified underlying the development of Special Interest Centres that have already been established to provide opportunities for interested and talented students.

The debate revolves around the notion of standards of excellence, and the degree to which such centres should focus upon training to professional standards. One viewpoint is well articulated by Parr (1974:3) when, commenting on a proposal for a Secondary School of the Arts, he stated:

> *"The Victorian College of the Arts recognises the need to bring together children of special musical talent, to offer them the best available teachers, to train them in company of their peers, to integrate their musical studies into appropriate general education; above all, to provide them with a learning environment which will constantly challenge and stimulate their special talents and to give them music education at a professional level when they are ready to undertake it. To delay professional training until a student reaches the age of entry to tertiary education is often to destroy a student's chances of success because certain skills, especially those associated with stringed instruments, must be mastered during phases of physical development which have passed by the time a student reaches tertiary education . . . In particular, it believes that the general education component and the music component of a child's education should be unified and sympathetically related".*

This approach emphasises the importance of training people for vocational purposes and therefore has important implications for the way in which students are trained in certain fields at the secondary school level.

A different, but not necessarily conflicting, point of view was expressed in a South Australian report (1976):

> *"The development of exceptional skills in music requires that students commence study of an instrument at an early age. By the time the student reaches high school the work load is such that potential musicians who want to develop proficiency in particular instruments have little time for recreation or school work.*
>
> *This difficulty can be overcome by the establishment of music centres as part of ordinary high schools where students carry out study in basic core subjects and yet devote part of the school day to music. In addition it is also an advantage to bring students involved in musical studies together.*
>
> *In South Australia, music centres are seen in the context of developing each individual child to his capacity, rather than in the context of producing professional musicians. Music centres will not, as far as possible, be elitist and will not be just instrumental. Composition (avant garde, traditional and electronic styles), vocal studies and ethno-musicology will all have a part."*

2.9 The South Australian view emphasises the need to develop each individual child to his/her capacity rather than emphasising the training of professional musicians. Although the notion of professionalism or vocational-oriented training as part of the philosophy of secondary education has many critics, some credence can be given to support such a stance in certain fields. For example, Parr (1974:3) commenting on the need to provide centres for dance in the Victorian Education system stated:

> *"In the art of dance, especially the art of classical ballet, students commonly begin training at the age of 7, 8 or 9. Serious professional training should begin at the age of eleven for purely physiological reasons. A dancer who begins late or is badly trained is very unlikely to reach his/her full potential and might, in addition, sustain latent physical damage leading to a later legacy of actual disablement. The training of young dancers is at present a seriously haphazard process, often in the hands of ignorant and unqualified teachers, which puts many young lives at risk . . . It is generally agreed that young dancers should be able to enter a . . special secondary school, receive thorough training under careful medical supervision, be directed by the best available teachers, work with others of similar interests and abilities, and have a sound and continuing general education which does not exclude entry into tertiary education in due course."*

2.10 To reconcile these different approaches it may be useful to consider the provision of Special Schools emphasising the importance of vocationally-oriented training to be an alternative sub-set within the broader concept of Special Schools designed to develop the interests and talents of students as far as possible. Students who desire to develop their special talents with a specific vocational purpose in certain fields may choose to select a Special Interest Centre with an appropriate philosophy. However, any decision to embark on a professional career at that stage involves many uncertainties such as changing career patterns and aspirations, fluctuations in the job market and so on. By the same token, educational administrators need to consider carefully the complexities involved in streaming children towards a career.

2.11 The need to develop special talents in other fields such as the visual arts has been emphasised by educationalists such as Goodman (1977:5) who noted:

> *"I am sure that a crucial requirement in the education of artistically gifted children is the creation of an ambience which implicitly communicates that their particular enthusiasm is not only valued in them, but is a respected and valued component of the school in which they have operated, an approving and reinforcing ambience in which the arts can truly flourish. A youngster gifted in art need not then feel that his deep preoccupation is considered esoteric, of merely peripheral importance, or unmanly."*

Thus, the need for a secure and stimulating environment is seen as essential by Goodman, if talented students are to realise their full potential.

> *PROPOSITION 5:*
>
> *Within the area of special interests there is an urgent need to provide challenges for students with abilities in the visual and performing arts. If such interests and talents are to mature such provision cannot be left until students enter tertiary education.*

2.12 The above examples show some of the problems in the field of creative art. Traditionally, many arts education programs have been considered "soft options" in secondary schools, and have lacked resources so that curriculum innovations could be implemented. However, the need for a reappraisal of the traditional curriculum to provide challenges and stimulating experiences in all areas is emphasised if the potential of talented students is to be realised. There is a diverse range of special interests and talents in other areas that could also be fostered, and a summary of some of these areas is presented in Table 2. It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss the potential of cultivating special interests in all of these areas, but in the following chapter some selected examples will serve to illustrate some of the areas that could be developed.

Table 2
POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

Provided here is a simple alphabetical list of a wide range of activities and interests. This is purely a reminder list and may be used either by any general purpose club to find ideas for its own activities or it may be used by a general planning body to stimulate interest in the development of Special Interest Centres.

A
- Angling
- Archery
- Athletics
- Aqualunging
- Aero-modelling
- Art
- Ambulance Training
- Astronomy
- Aquarium keeping
- Aviation
- Aikido

B
- Badminton
- Ballet
- Ballroom Dancing
- Baseball
- Bushwalking
- Basketball
- Billiards
- Book-binding
- Bee-keeping
- Boomerangs
- Bowls
- Birdwatching

C
- Calisthenics
- Canoeing
- Chess
- Cricket
- Cycling
- Carpet bowls
- Choir
- Cookery
- Car Maintenance
- Cross-country running
- Circus
- Carpentry
- Coin Collecting

D
- Debating
- Darts
- Drama
- Driving
- Draughts
- Dressmaking
- Dog Training
- Discussion
- Dance

E
- Electronics
- Entomology
- Environmental Studies

F
- Fencing
- Film-making
- Football – Aust. Rules
- Rugby
- Soccer
- Folk Music
- Folk Dancing
- Floral Art
- Fibre-glass construction
- Fishing

G
- Gemmology
- Gliding
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Gardening
- Go-Karts

H
- Historical Studies
- Horticulture
- Hiking
- Horse riding
- Hockey

I
- Ice-skating
- Ice-Hockey

J
- Judo
- Jewellery making

K
- Kites
- Knitting
- Kayaking
- Karate

L
- Lacrosse
- Lifesaving
- Lapidiary

M
- Mountaineering
- Music
- Metalwork
- Motor-cycling
- Map Reading
- Mini-bikes
- Mechanics
- Movie-making
- Model-making

N
- Natural History
- Needlework

O
- Ornithology
- Origami

P
- Photography
- Parachuting
- Painting
- Pigeon Racing
- Public Speaking
- Printing
- Puppetry
- Pottery
- Politics

Q
- Quoits

R
- Rock Climbing
- Rowing
- Rifle Shooting
- Radio & Electronics
- Reptile Keeping
- Roller Skating

T
- Tennis
- Table Tennis
- Theatre
- Trampolining
- Tropical Fish

S
- Sailing
- Sculpture
- Skiing
- Skin-diving
- Softball
- Squash
- Swimming
- Seamenship
- Shotgun Shooting (trap)
- Ski Touring
- Sewing
- Stamp Collecting

V
- Volley Ball
- Vaudeville

W
- Water-skiing
- Weaving
- Weight-lifting
- Wrestling

Y
- Yoga
- Yachting

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Chapter 3

A SURVEY OF EXISTING SPECIAL INTEREST FACILITIES

"Youth belongs to those latent resources which every society has at its disposal and on the mobilisation of which its vitality depends."

Mannheim, 1943

SOME OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENTS

3. In many parts of the world attempts are being made to implement curriculum expansion to service better the needs of individual students. Part of this movement has focussed upon those students with special interests and talents whose needs previously were neglected within the boundaries of traditional education systems. A number of international conferences have been convened to focus specifically upon the needs of gifted students, the most recent being the 1977 World Conference held in San Francisco, and representative nations have outlined the program for the development of interested and talented students in their respective countries. Many first and third world nations attended these conferences indicating that the development of talent is not only a concern of the developed nations, but is recognised as a need by nations at all levels of economic development. The problem of the "brain drain" has long been a major concern of third world countries and thus the development of special talents and interests is seen as a major need in programs of economic development.

3.1 A recent report by the New South Wales Department of Education (1977: Ch. 6) noted that:

> *"In recent years many countries such as Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, India and South Africa to name but a few, have witnessed growing interest in the question of education of the talented and there have been a number of wide-ranging programs initiated in these countries."*

This list of countries again illustrates the importance of talent development within all types of economic systems. A brief overview of these developments follows.

ENGLAND

3.2 It is important to emphasise that the provision of education for talented or interested students in any country usually depends upon the structure of the education system within that country. Traditionally, the 11 plus exam has been employed to stream the more academically talented students into Grammar Schools, although the Comprehensive School movement in England has tended to put this system into disfavour, (even though some Local Education Authorities still use it). However, many eminent examples of special interest and special talent centres can be found in England. The Yehudi Menuhin Music School is world famous and has produced world class violinists. As well, for the child who displays exceptional talent as a dancer, there is admission to the Royal Ballet School, which has obtained excellent results in the training of dancers, while still offering a general education program. In addition, at the primary school level some withdrawal programs have been established as temporary systems on a trial basis. The recent New South Wales report on gifted children (1977:41) pointed out that Brentwood College of Education in England has instituted a withdrawal-based system, where talented students from neighbouring primary schools attend the college for half a day each week to engage in academic and creative activities.

Robb (1976) attributes considerable significance to the work at Brentwood when he suggests:

> *"It is to this work that we owe the first unequivocal statement by gifted children that while they loved being with their intellectual peers for part of their week, they would not wish to separate from their own class full-time. A further important outcome was the attitudinal change reported by each of the head teachers concerned – 'They're all much more tolerant, patient children than they were – much nicer children . . .'"*

3.3 Many other withdrawal-based provisions have been undertaken in England for children with special interests and talents. Ogilvie (1973) in a research study for the Schools Council, found that provision for the talented in English primary schools was confined to special groupings and curriculum enrichment within the normal school. As a further example, at Bristol University a group of gifted 12-year olds attend the School of Education for one afternoon each week to work

with graduate students on a variety of activities (Wilks 1973). Also, some education authorities have instituted special classes servicing a number of schools and meeting once or twice a week. The Plowden Report (1967) adopted a philosophy that in most cases the talented pupil could be catered for in a good primary school. However, a voluntary organisation in the United Kingdom, the National Association for Gifted Children, encourages parents and other interested adults to conduct at weekends special activities for gifted children.

SOVIET UNION

3.4 The basic organisational model for education in the Soviet Union is the neighbourhood school. Education is predominantly comprehensive up to this stage, although some special schools have been established for students with special interests and talents such as mathematics, music and ballet.

However, these are mainly neighbourhood schools with students recruited from local catchment areas. Some other provisions are made for gifted children. One alternative is the University boarding schools, of which there are four, which cater for students from rural areas only. Selection is competitively based ('academic olympiads') and those successful then sit for an entrance test on the mathematics and physics syllabus for the eight year course. In such residential schools the students undertake the general curriculum with extra time being devoted to special subjects under the supervision and guidance of University academics (Grant, 1979; Simon, 1969).

3.5 A further innovation in the U.S.S.R. is special interest clubs known as Circles. These are clubs catering for all children after school hours. Academically gifted children may use them to develop their abilities and interests to enter the "olympiads" and gain recognition and possible entry to the Special Schools.

Finally, some special provision is also made through correspondence programs to develop talents and interests, and the local teacher provides a contact and assistance for students involved in such programs.

ISRAEL

3.6 Butler (1975) presented a paper at the World Conference for Gifted Children outlining the provision for talented students in Israel. She stated that it was first decided in spring 1973 to create special classes for highly gifted children in regular primary schools. The decision was taken by the Minister of Education and Culture after lengthy discussions in which psychologists, educationists and welfare administrators participated. The concept of special education programs for the gifted was not an entirely novel one for the country, as much valuable work has been done in the form of enrichment courses conducted by local authorities and institutes of higher education. However, it was the realisation that the gifted child's special abilities could not be fully catered for in the existing classroom situation that finally convinced the Ministry of Education to embark on the project of special classes for the gifted. In consultation with various local authorities it was decided to open six special classes in 1973. A special third and fourth form were to be opened in Tel Aviv and the same in Haifa. A team of psychologists and educational innovators led by the director of the unit for the education of the gifted in the Ministry of Education developed the aims of the project and supervised the initiation and implementation of the experiment. Local needs dictated local policy. For example, Butler (1975) points out that in Tel Aviv it was decided to put all three classes in one school whereas in Haifa it was decided to put them in separate schools in the hope that each class would serve as a change agent in local education in general and in the host school in particular. The program was being expanded to include four additional classes. In 1975 there were ten special classes for the gifted catering for most of the primary school age range, and discussions were being held on the possibility of extending the present experiment to encompass secondary education. Also, many enrichment courses were being conducted within and without the school, often conducted by teachers and personnel from other agencies. For example, Evyatar (1973) pointed out that in Israel in 1969-70 a carefully selected group of students was given an enrichment course in computing and chemical engineering during their summer vacations, and such temporary "total immersion" methods have been used in many other areas.

INDIA

3.7 A paper presented at the 1975 World Conference by Saxena (1975) summarised the provision for students with special talents in India. Saxena (1975) noted considerable concern for the identification and nurturing of children with exceptionally high learning potential, and attempts to find them as young as possible and give them extra help and social advancement so that they may fruitfully develop their talents. Therefore, attempts are made in India to find such children at the earliest possible stage and to provide an educational environment that will help them to grow intellectually, physically, morally and socially.

3.8 The salient schemes sponsored by the various government and non-governmental agencies in India are:

(a) **National Science Talent Search Scheme:**
This was started as a pilot project in the city of New Delhi in 1963 for identifying talented students with high intellectual ability and a marked aptitude for basic sciences, at the end of their school education. In 1964 it was extended all over the country and since that time 350 scholars have been assisted. They are identified through a comprehensive process consisting of aptitude and ability tests. The entire education of these scholars is supported up to the doctoral level by the National Council of Educational Research and Training which is an autonomous body related to the Ministry of Education. The main purpose of this program is to produce a group of outstanding scientists in the country and foster them.

(b) **The National Rural Talent Search Scheme:**
The central Ministry of Education and Social Welfare has sponsored, from 1971-72, a comprehensive scheme to provide academic encouragement and economic assistance to talented children from rural areas. This has had an effective influence on the overall national development because it provides opportunities for children in the rural areas who have no opportunity of being exposed to the sophistications of organised learning. Academic and social benefits are given to these creative and talented rural children for a period of three years terminating at the end of high school. Scholarships are allocated in such a way that there are two scholarships for each community.

(c) **The National Scholarship Scheme:**
Every year over 12,000 talented and academic children receive scholarships up to the first university degree. The Ministry of Education finances the scheme.

(d) **National Scholarships for Children for School Teaching:**
Annually 500 talented pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers receive scholarships for higher education. These scholarships are subject to parental income and are financed by the central Ministry of Education.

(e) **Cultural Talent Search Scholarship:**
For the purpose of pursuing fine arts such as music, dance, painting and sculpture, every year 125 merit scholarships are awarded to children in the age group 10-14. The central Ministry of Education and Social Welfare holds competitions all over the country to find gifted children belonging to the lower socio-economic class. A comprehensive search is undertaken with the active assistance of the National Council for Educational Research and Training. The selected scholars are given the opportunity of being located in the top institutions in the country. To perpetuate the memory of a well-known Indian scientist, a number of scholarships were instituted over a decade and a half ago, facilitating the higher education of a group of students gifted in applied sciences and medicine.

(f) **Sports Talent Search Scheme:**
A limited number of scholarships have been introduced by the Central Ministry of Education for nurturing sports talents at selected centres in the country.

3.9 Some scientific and technical institutions make efforts to encourage and nurture the talents of children. Associations such as the School Mathematical Society and the Scientific Teachers Association Madras provide assistance for the gifted. Also, Educational foundations attempt to nurture the gifted especially in academic areas, but experiments regarding specialist schools for the gifted are still in their infancy.

UNITED STATES

3.10 Because of the decentralised nature of the education system in the United States attempts to cater for the needs of students with special interests and special talents are varied. Some special school models have been established such as the High School of Performing Arts in New York which recruits students with special talents in drama and music as well as relatively high intelligence. Similarly, the Bronx High School of Science selects students with special talents in mathematics and science.

3.11 A further form of organisation for talented students in the United States is a special class which offers enriched activities in addition to the basic curriculum. For example, New York City has developed I.G.C. (Intellectually Gifted Children) classes, especially at the Junior Secondary level for students with an I.Q. of 125+. Khatena (1976) outlined a similar scheme in the United States which operates as a temporary system, (the above mentioned model is a permanent system) where a select group of students with an I.Q. of 130+, as well as high achievement, interest and motivation were given enrichment activities in science, mathematics, language and music, geared to a creative-thinking and problem-solving program, held over a three month summer vacation period. These venues for assisting the talented have been widely used in the United States employing such models as summer camps, seminars, clubs, and special sessions in Universities and Colleges.

3.12 In addition to providing opportunities for intellectually talented students a number of programs and organisations have been developed to cater for students with special interests. One such special educational environment is the zoo school in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This school was developed to foster the educational opportunities of students who are interested in environmental issues at the grade 6 level in elementary education. Jackel (1977: Ch. 2) pointed out that at the zoo school students were selected on the basis of high achievement, high motivation, interest in the outdoors, and personal interest in the programs. The school is primarily an environmental study program. Many activities are designed to be conducted outside the classroom as a means of encouraging an awareness of, and sensitivity toward, natural and social environments. (Social environment is defined as forces which interact directly and indirectly with natural forces, the result being such current problems as pollution, the energy crisis, depletion of natural resources, endangered species of animals and human destructiveness.)

The program is understood to be only a link in the continuing education of the students. Academic skills are emphasised as an important factor in their success throughout the remaining years of school. Although the classroom methods and curriculum materials may differ from those used in most other classes, mathematics, social studies, science, reading and writing are still presented in compliance with board of education requirements. Although the program deviates markedly from the traditional curriculum in the form of special projects, activities and courses, the obligation to prepare students for subsequent grades is tacitly assumed. Of course the zoo school emphasises studies of nature, but its definition of environmental education transcends natural studies to include the entire gamut of human experiences in today's world. Relevant issues of the day, such as the economy, the Middle East, racial and ethnic problems and other current controversial topics are all integral parts of the total environment into which the students are entering. The zoo school utilises the available outdoor facilities as part of its environmental program. Animal observation in the zoo is a regular part of the curriculum, as are plant and tree identification, classes in zoology, geology and botany, outdoor survival, physical fitness, migratory bird observation and camping. Field trips are scheduled for rock collecting, children visit the weather station at the airport, explore an antique collector's farm and ancient farm equipment, hike for an afternoon through the woods, or plant a garden for one of the community's elderly citizens. Thus, the zoo school has incorporated and rationalised some of the existing community facilities into a different type of school organisation to develop the interests and talents of students motivated in the area of environmental education. Some similar attempts have been made in Australia on a smaller scale. For example, the Educational Unit at the Melbourne Zoo has involved a group of grade 4 children from a nearby school in a week's curriculum program at the Zoo. The Zoo provides the stimulation for the week's curriculum in science, maths, physical education, music, drama and English. Such programs could be adopted for environmental studies in a wide range of other environments such as national parks, wild life sanctuaries and game reserves.

AUSTRALIA

3.13 In the various Australian States and Territories some provisions have been made for students with special interests and talents. Most educational authorities acknowledge that there is a need to expand research and development focussing upon special programs for students with such interests and talents. It is beyond the scope of this study to review all the educational provisions available in this field. Therefore, some sample programs will be examined to give some indication of the nature and level of provision in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

3.14 The Australian Capital Territory has not implemented any formal provision for students with special interests/talents, although enrichment programs do operate in some schools.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

3.15 Within the Northern Territory some interest is being shown in the need to develop the abilities of students with special interest/talents and some special programs for the talented in music, sciences and languages are now being evaluated. For example, the Northern Territory School of Music operates within a comprehensive high school. Also residential colleges exist for talented aboriginal students who have shown outstanding academic achievement and ability to cope with bicultural learning.

3.16 The Northern Territory Division of the Commonwealth Department of Education has for some time provided a number of activities and interest programs which can be classified as enrichment programs. Such activities are usually provided in the context of a school or general community facility. These programs are in addition to the normal school curriculum and are usually, but not invariably, available after school hours. The special interest activities include the following: bush craft, tie dyeing, first aid, leather work, trampoline activities, camping, drama, dancing, craft, music, languages, needlework, macrame, puppetry and basket-weaving. In addition, there is a gifted children's program which provides enrichment activities both within and outside school hours. The number of children involved is small for each activity and the experiment is confined to secondary pupils at present. Activities include film-making, mathematics and Australian politics.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

3.17 South Australia has developed a number of Special Interest Centres, which have been built into the normal comprehensive curriculum offered in any secondary school in South Australia. Students from anywhere in South Australia have access to such centres with boarding and/or travel allowances being paid where applicable. A brief review of some of these centres follows.

3.18 **Adelaide High School**

This school has been organised as a special Language High School. At the year 8-10 level the special language students undertake two languages, whereas the normal stream undertakes one. Year 11 represents a second entry point for students to be admitted to a language course, and an intensive language program is undertaken at this stage in at least two foreign languages by each student.

Ethnic language courses are an important part of this program and it is proposed in the future to extend this package beyond the five languages offered at present. "Language" as outlined in Figure 1 and the need for a special language school is indicated by the following extract taken from a working paper presented by the South Australian Department of Education (1975:2):

> *"Powerful economic, geographic and political factors militate against Australia isolating itself from the rest of the world, even if this were socially desirable. The same factors require a greater awareness of, appreciation and sensitivity to the cultures, aspirations and feelings of people from other nations. Language provides a key to this awareness . . . For most Australians foreign language study per se will not open the door to a large number of careers . . . Foreign language competence will, however, lead to increased competence in other careers both in local as well as national and international operations".*

3.19 **Marryatville High School**

This school has been developed as one of a complex of four music schools. The others are at Brighton, Woodville and Freemont which opened in 1979. It is proposed that the latter school be developed as a performing arts special school. The Music Centre at Marryatville High School has been converted from a former coach house to a stimulating environment housing two classrooms, one seminar room, an electronic music studio, a large resource centre and comfortable foyer and

performance area, seating approximately 200. Because of the enormous expense involved in the building and resources there are plans for a wider community use.

Edited extracts from the Marryatville High School brochure outline the Music Centre's program:

A. General Music:

(a) As is currently the case in most secondary schools, all year eight students undertake music at the Music Centre.

(b) The course consists of two forty-minute periods a week for the year and is meant to give students an insight into a wide range of musical experiences. The sessions are designed to be educational, but also enjoyable, and require active participation on the part of the student.

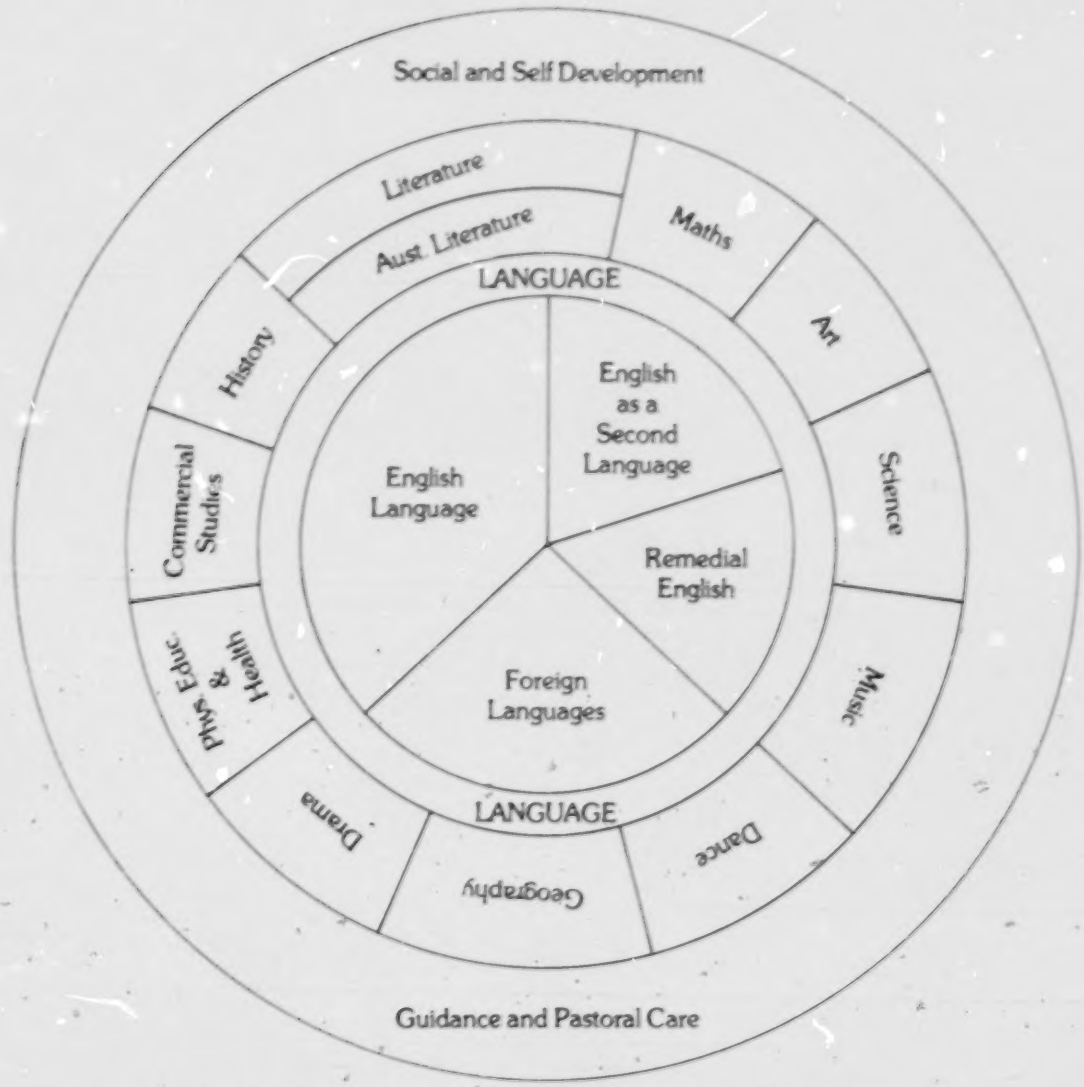

Figure 1

MODEL FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN A SPECIAL LANGUAGE SCHOOL

B Music 1:

These students elect to study music in preference to a variety of other subjects, spending four to six lessons a week in the Music Centre. In year nine the recorder is sometimes used as a classroom instrument; the students learn basic music theory which becomes an aid in aural and composition work. In other lessons, the year nine student develops an ability to recognise visually and aurally the capabilities of the various orchestral instruments. Studying the works of great composers is an important part of the curriculum and this is used to lead the student through simple score-reading and analysis, to a study of selected periods in the history of music. All Music 1 students learn an instrument, as a preparation for Matriculation. Allowances have been made for each of these students to attend one lesson a week given by a teacher from the Music Branch and they can be provided with an instrument for this purpose. Year 10 and 11 Music 1 students study music along the same lines as mentioned above, but in greater detail and with the logical extensions.

C. Music 2:

From the practical point of view, all students learn two instruments and some three. While most learn orchestral instruments, there are at present a couple of guitar and electronic organ players and some vocal students. The lessons are conducted by peripatetic teachers from the Music Branch and private teachers who visit the school, though some of the students travel to institutions such as the Elder Conservatorium and the College of Further Education Music Department for their tuition.

Further activities focus around ensemble work, choir, madrigal groups, chamber music, and an orchestra.

Apart from the practical aspects which form the most obvious part of the course, theoretical studies are also pursued. Composition includes writing for solo instruments and ensembles, both vocal and instrumental, and such works can afterwards be performed by the students. Also, the works of great composers in the classical tradition are studied. Some of this study is done with intensity and some to achieve a broad perspective of the history of music and sound.

3.20 **Proposed Special Dance School**

In addition to the special schools in music and language, South Australia is also about to embark on the development of a special dance school at Glenunga High School. It is proposed that a special dance curriculum will be developed and also special facilities and staffing arrangements will be undertaken. The project is expected to begin in 1979.

3.21 **Arbury Park Outdoor School**

In addition to schools for students with special talents, some activities and centres have been utilised to provide enrichment opportunities for students with special interests. For example, Arbury Park Outdoor School has been developed to provide enriched environmental opportunities for schools incorporating outdoor learning and living within their curriculum. The buildings on site consist of six dormitories (each for 16 children and one teacher), shower block, dining/administration block, gymnasium and teachers' residence. Existing on the property is a barn and a milking shed, as well as a serviceable tennis court, and a water tank which was, many years ago, a swimming pool. The new school has its own transport, so that the many interesting areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges are readily accessible for pursuits more diverse than those available immediately to the school.

Activities envisaged at the Arbury Park Outdoor School include environmental studies (embracing conservation, geology, botany, biology, etc.), bushwalking, practice in canvas camping skills, safety first, creative and expressive arts (including drama, art, music etc.), action projects, navigation, local history and leisure time pursuits. The informal skills developed as the result of co-operative living are also beneficial, not only for the children but for the teachers with them.

3.22 **Use of other community facilities**

In addition to these, South Australia has undertaken to utilise some existing community facilities to provide an enriched environment for drama activities. An old cinema has been leased by the Education Department, and a group of seven teachers are employed at this site to develop educational units across a wide range of curriculum experiences. The potential exists to utilise such sites extensively for talented students who could be involved at all levels of drama productions and performances.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

3.23 Western Australia has also adopted a comprehensive model for its school system. Certain high schools offer special facilities to cater for talented students in areas such as art, music, ballet and languages. In addition some special interests are provided for, such as agriculture, arts/crafts, and media studies. These are in comprehensive high schools which offer specialised assistance in addition to the demands of the normal school program.

3.24 **North Lake Media Centre**

North Lake High School has developed a specialised media centre for students who have an interest in media studies. Courses are designed to provide relevant experiences in skill development and understanding of both the process and technology of media output. The importance of media studies at this Special Interest Centre is outlined in a curriculum guide (1976) as follows:

> *"A Media Education is based upon the belief that education must be closely related to the environment in which it exists. The environment for today's education is the mass-media environment, an environment so powerful, so persuasive, that its effect in shaping lives and values is unprecedented in human history.*
>
> *It is important to build a student's comprehension of the impact of the modern mass media: of the effect as a medium itself and of the content within the medium . . . With this understanding the student is in a position to be more than a semi-passive receiver of messages.*
>
> *Secondly, the media skills, such as the ability to use effectively still and movie photographic equipment, sound and television equipment, are fundamental skills for students to possess if they are to communicate effectively."*

Thus, the special interest facility as envisaged at North Lake is designed to provide a specialised environment to enable interested students to develop their abilities in this field.

The costs associated with the development of the North Lake Senior High School are summarised below:

BUILDINGS: An initial grant of $80,000 was provided for the construction of the Centre.

EQUIPMENT: The initial equipment costs were $20,000 and an annual budget of $10,000 is provided to cater for 1,000 students.

STAFFING: Three full-time staff and one part-time staff member are employed.

3.25 **Agricultural High Schools**

There are four residential agricultural high schools in Western Australia. They are at Narrogin, Harvey, Cunderdin and Denmark. While remaining part of the high school, each Agricultural Wing is located some distance from the respective towns. Courses offered are suited to students intending to return to their home farms to become farmers. Some students may find careers in industries associated with agriculture. Agricultural Wings offer courses in seven Certificate of Secondary Education subjects. Students are therefore eligible for receipt of the Certificate after completion of the two-year course. Courses cover the principles of Agricultural Science together with practical farming activities and associated modern trade practice. None of the subjects is intended to qualify students for entry into tertiary institutions, but this progression is possible in individual cases – particularly for entry into the Western Australian Institute of Technology. Admission to Agricultural Wings is by selection. Each applicant must have completed three years of secondary education. A school fee is payable to the Education Department early each term and individual schools levy a fee to cover amenities and various deposits. Agricultural Wing students are eligible to claim for the Commonwealth Government's Scheme for Isolated Children.

3.26 **Kelmscott Senior High School**

In addition to these special agricultural high schools, a special interest agricultural project was undertaken at Kelmscott Senior High School. The school received an initial grant of $12,000 from the Schools Commission to establish the farm together with $4,000 school funds. In the beginning the buildings and land were leased to the Education Department on a peppercorn rental, but recently the Education Department has purchased the site for $75,000. A piggery was constructed from available school funds, and a classroom was supplied by the Education Department. Most of the equipment was donated and then overhauled or renovated by the school. It is interesting to note that the school has been almost "embarrassed" by the number of animals being offered to the school by the general public.

3.27 **John Curtin Senior High School**

At the John Curtin Senior High School in 1973, a Lively Arts Course (Theatre Arts and Dance) was implemented for talented students in these fields. In 1976, a grant was approved for updating the school hall and for adapting a large classroom into a theatre. Students are selected from auditions following advertisements in the newspapers. The general aim of this course is to provide opportunities in theatre arts and/or dance for full-time students in addition to the normal school curriculum. It provides opportunities also for students to work together in groups and enables the work performances of these students to enrich the whole community, as performances are presented to the public during the school year.

Students in theatre arts are encouraged to visit the theatre as often as possible at concession rates, and they are expected to devote at least three hours out-of-school to theatre arts study.

This school has two gymnasiums, one with a permanent ballet barre and full lighting facilities for the stage as well as a large portable ballet floor. The costs associated with the development of the John Curtin Senior High School Dance and Drama facility are summarised below:

BUILDINGS: The total cost of renovations and equipment for the set up of the Centre was $29,000.

STAFFING: Three full-time staff are employed plus an average of twelve part-time lecturers from community services at an average of six hours per week.

VICTORIA

3.28 There is an increasing concern among various interest groups regarding the education of talented students in Victorian schools. Some Victorian High Schools offer a specialised program in Music such as Blackburn High School, and MacRobertson Girl's High School. These schools have similar aims and objectives to the music schools in other States.

3.29 **Secondary School of the Arts**

A proposal to establish a secondary school of the arts is under way, and this school will have specialist facilities for dance and music. Students will be carefully selected and monitored to ensure that only those having strong vocational potential are admitted and retained. The school will eventually be housed on the same campus as the Victorian College of the Arts, and from the outset its activities will be co-ordinated closely with the tertiary program. This type of approach presents a further alternative model linking a specialist secondary school with the facilities available within a tertiary college.

3.30 **Essendon Technical School**

This school has established a language centre, located in an old house near the main school site. Ethnic languages and remedial English programs are offered as part of the curriculum. In addition a program is being offered whereby language staff are involved in teaching English as a second language to migrant workers at various industrial sites around the area. The potential exists here for the establishment of a special language centre which could be funded on a private/government consortium basis, and such a centre could offer programs to many different groups within the school and the community.

3.31 In addition to these examples, many forms of enrichment activities are offered within school programs, and other special interests such as agriculture which is provided for in schools such as Irymple Technical School.

3.32 It should be emphasised that the degree of specialisation, the nature of the programs and the design and provision of specialist facilities vary considerably even within a specific area such as music, and thus what may be considered "special" in one location, may be inferior to the provision of specialist facilities for the same subject in another location. Thus there is no formal blueprint outlining any minimal standards of acceptability for specialist facilities in a particular field and such facilities have developed without any common standard of reference.

PROPOSITION 6:

It is imperative that any new developments in the area of special interest education should be based on knowledge derived from a comprehensive examination of current theory and practice in any given area.

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Chapter 4

FORMS OF ORGANISATION FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

"No form of organisation of itself can cause things to happen – but it can make it possible or easier for humans to do so."

F J. Rutherford (Harvard University)

4. An examination of the existing special interest facilities in the various Australian States, as outlined previously, has contributed to the development of the following alternative approaches to the establishment of Special Interest Centres in Australia. Each of the models outlined has a number of inherent advantages/ disadvantages and effective utilisation of a particular approach is contingent upon the presence/absence of a number of salient variables in a specific environment. In the following sections the respective merits of each of the models will be examined.

ALTERNATIVE 1: *Establishment of Special Interest Centres within Existing Schools*

4.1 Under this heading three forms of organisation will be considered.

Figure 2 illustrates the establishment of a centralised Special Interest Centre within the boundaries of an existing school. Some of the Special Music Schools in Victoria, and Special Language Schools in Western Australia are examples of such an approach. In both of these States, the students are selected on a basis of "exceptional talent" in addition to their degree of motivation towards or interest in, such an activity.

One approach is for these centralised organisations to cater for students drawn from within the school zone or region. Such zones or regions represent units created by Departments of Education for administrative purposes. In addition, students who are located outside the zone may apply to attend these special schools. Students who apply from outside the zone submit their academic record to a panel of relevant professionals and a decision is made concerning the suitability of the student to pursue the selected activity within the school.

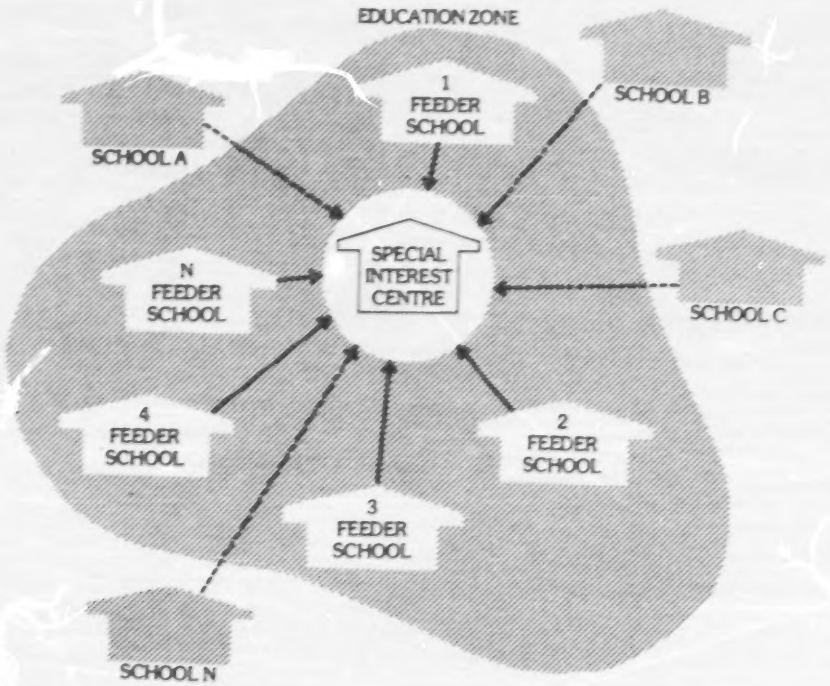


Figure 2

CENTRALISED "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

4.2 These "special" schools are granted preferential expenditures for staffing and facilities in a particular subject area, and thus enrichment education is available for a particular subject. Transport costs are subsidised for students who have to commute from outside the zone to attend these centres.

4.3 A number of arguments can be presented relating to the abolition of zoning if such an approach to the provision of Special Interest Centres is to be adopted:

(a) If zoning is not enforced there is little evidence of "mass migration" across previously established boundaries. Students still tend to present themselves at the nearest school, e.g. Queensland experience and Edmonton, Alberta (Canadian experience) where zoning has been removed.

(b) During the 1970's secondary enrolments tended to decline and thus additional placements are available in many "special" schools.

(c) As the decision-making process for many schools becomes further decentralised, and School Councils become more involved at the local level, the presence of "a democratic right to send a student to a school of the parents/students choosing" is increased.

(d) As schools become more diversified in program options, a particular student's need may be better catered for in a given school, which necessitates the crossing of regional boundaries if that student's potential is to be more fully developed.

4.4 A second approach is to decentralise Special Interest Centres across a number of schools in a particular region, and rotate specialists across these centres, as illustrated in Figure 3.

4.5 If we assume that each of these centres is established to provide enrichment in a similar area, then the duplication of resources on a number of small scale units, although perhaps ideally desirable, may be extremely uneconomical, particularly if the activity is capital intensive. Much of the music education in normal school regions is conducted on this basis, as itinerant staff are rotated across a number of schools to provide music education.

4.6 On the other hand, if each centre is designed to cater for a *different* activity, and population density is spread evenly across a particular region, then the decentralisation of Special Interest Centres may be highly desirable provided no great cost disadvantage is involved. Thus, the probability of commuting costs being spread randomly and shared more evenly among members of a given community would be increased by the establishment of differentiated decentralised Special Interest Centres.

4.7 A third or "shared-use" approach relating to the development of an "in school" Special Interest Centre can be illustrated by reference to the Kew Music Centre in the grounds of the Kew Primary School in Victoria. This Special Interest Centre was funded by a consortium of government and non-government schools, local councils, State Ministry of the Arts and the Schools Commission. The organisations sharing the utilisation of this facility are depicted in Figure 4.

4.8 All of the agencies outlined in Figure 4 contributed to the funding of this special interest facility, and a shared-use timetable has been developed among these various organisations. The potential for a number of interesting educational innovations is present in a facility of this kind, including the following:

(a) Possibility of team teaching across normal school boundaries, where perhaps primary teachers could follow through the progress of students into junior forms at high school, if classes were so scheduled.

(b) Involvement of community resource personnel, particularly for consultation and advice in areas such as instrumental music.

(c) Established goodwill for further consortium approaches in a period of limited financing for educational innovations.

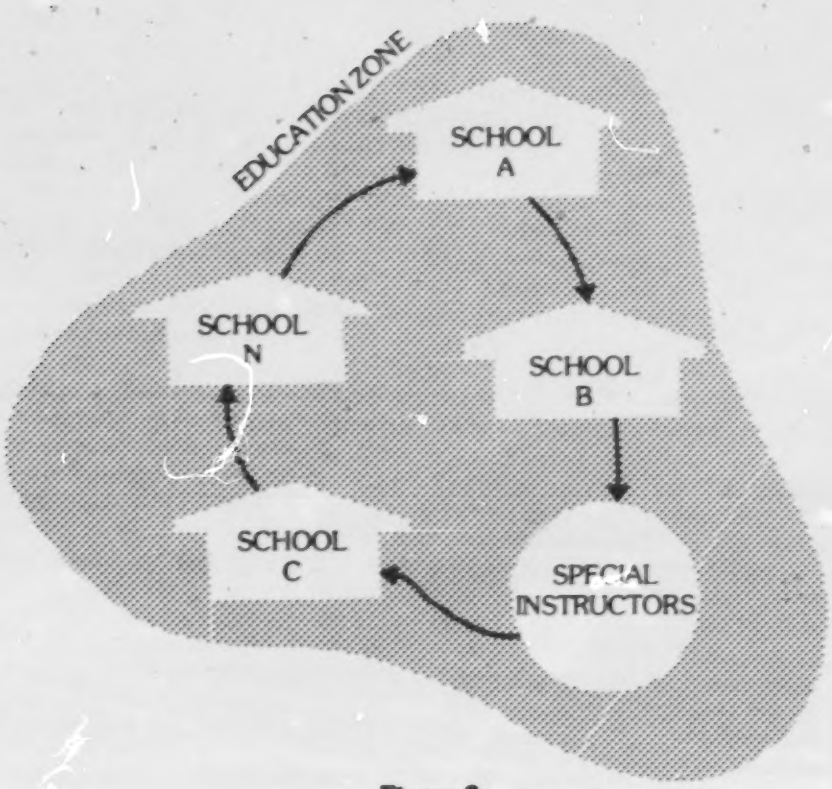


Figure 3

DECENTRALIZED "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE

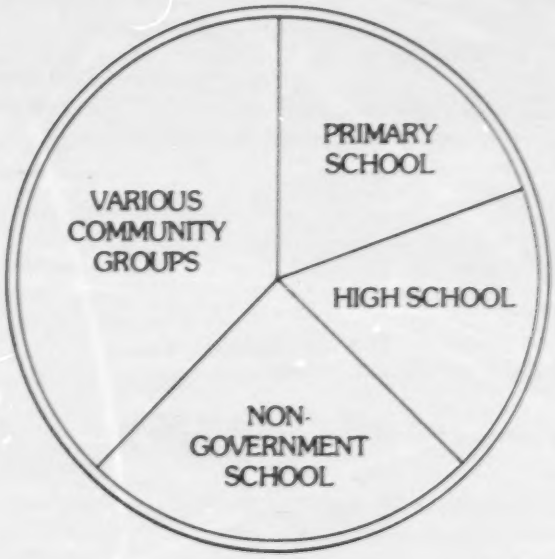


Figure 4

SHARED-USE "IN SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE

ALTERNATIVE 2: *"Out of School" Special Interest Centres (on a "total" or a "part" immersion basis).*

4.9 In the first model the Special Interest Centre is established outside an existing school facility as outlined in Figure 5 and students attend on a total immersion basis.

4.10 This "out of school" approach permits considerable freedom and innovation in potential physical plant design. It permits the establishment of a specialised environment for students who could attend the centre on a withdrawal basis from a number of regional schools. Such a facility may help alleviate the problem of rotating itinerant teachers if facilities are centralised and not duplicated in a number of feeder schools.

The possibility also exists of utilising existing facilities such as office space and housing to establish new Special Interest Centres if the building of new centres were seen to be prohibitive. However, it should be noted that the withdrawal of students from their regular school environment has many critics and thus such centres would have to provide enriched opportunities that were not available within a normal school facility. Agriculture could well be one interest catered for in this way.

4.11 Secondly, as outlined in Section 1 of this report, the concept of special interest has been very broadly defined, so that a wide range of interests can be encompassed and many states have attempted to integrate existing specialist facilities into the scope of normal school programs. For example, in Western Australia a number of special interest facilities have been utilised to develop aspects of school programs. Such facilities include the Western Australian Museum, where two teachers are *permanently* based for preparing learning materials and taking classes. Teachers are also based at King's Park, the Zoo, the Maritime Museum, Jarrahdale Field Studies Centre and the North Perth Art/Craft Centre.

Similarly, in Victoria existing specialist facilities are used to enrich the educational program, by locating teachers within the confines of these locations. Here again, students usually attend on an *irregular* withdrawal basis, although the potential does exist for in-depth specialist instruction in many of these areas.

4.12 It is important to emphasise that the staffing of these facilities at present is on the basis of secondment from the teaching force. However, personnel employed in such centres could be appointed to the professional staff in future, if continuity of staff is a desirable aim of staffing policy for such centres.

4.13 The rationalisation of many existing community facilities into educational environments presents some exciting possibilities for enriched alternatives. For example, in the area of environmental education, a decentralised campus school could be created for students with special interests and talents in this area.

Facilities such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, reserves, and the zoo could form the basis of a decentralised school of environmental studies for special students. At each site special courses in environmental studies could be offered for limited period total immersion basis, along with other subjects from the traditional curriculum. Students could rotate through such environments in semester units, if the school were developed on a residential model. The decentralised campus model outlined above could also be developed in a number of fields within the visual and performing arts.

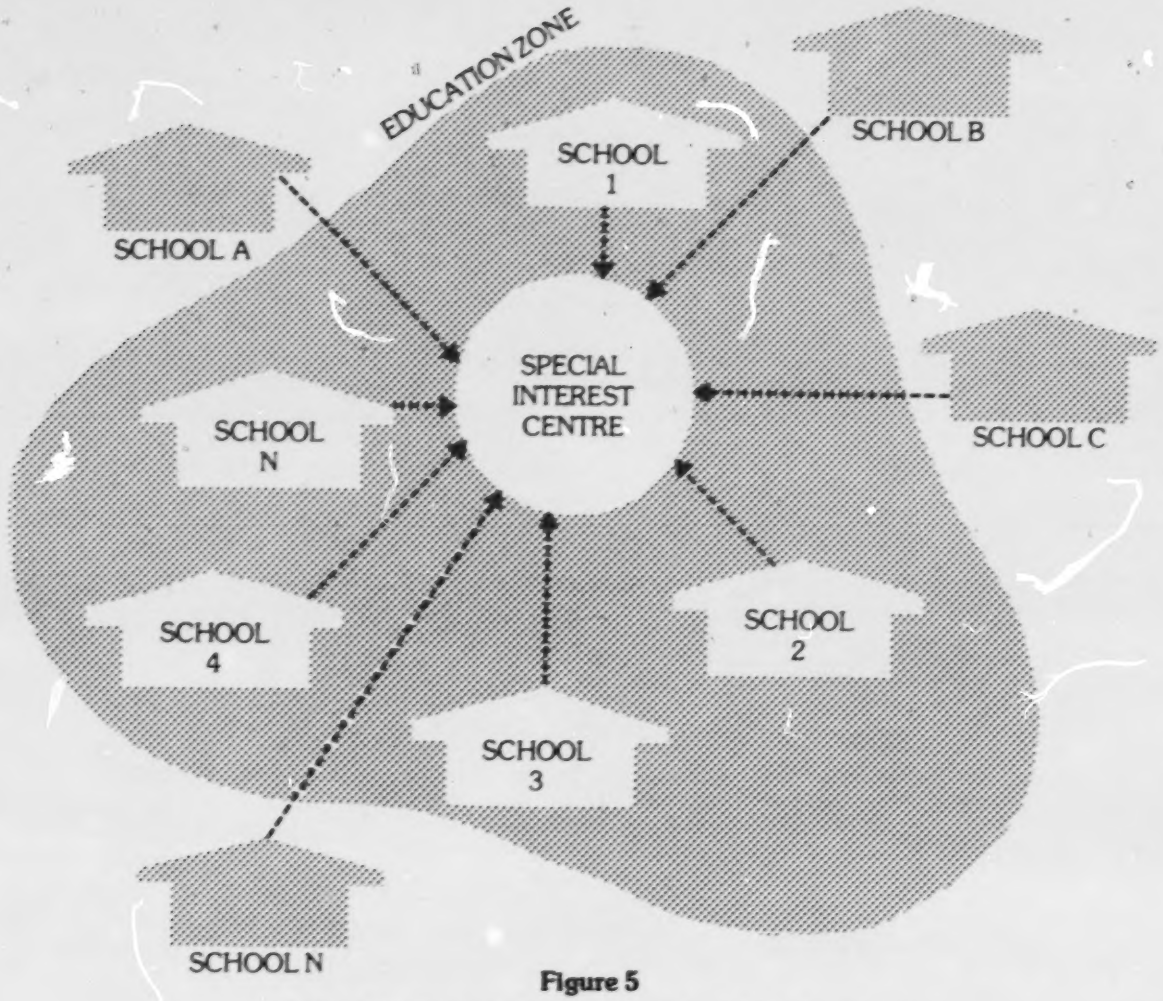


Figure 5

"OUT OF SCHOOL" SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE

ALTERNATIVE 3: *Linkage System between Educational Organisations at Different Levels.*

4.14 In Figure 6, the linkage model, a special interest secondary institution could be established on the same site as an appropriate tertiary institution.
In this system tertiary instruction and resources would be available to assist in the development of special talents and interests of secondary students. A fluid transfer of students, instructors and resources between the two systems would enable a smoother transfer for students into tertiary studies as they continue in their field of specialisation. This model could also enable more cost efficiency due to the spreading of overheads as resources would be utilised at both secondary and tertiary levels.

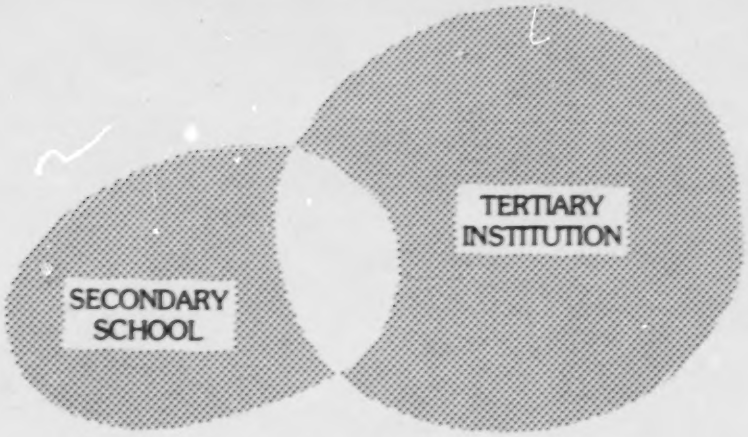


Figure 6

EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATION LINKAGE SYSTEM

ALTERNATIVE 4: *Government Funding to Community Organisations to develop Special Interests.*

4.15 Figure 7 represents a model utilised by Departments such as Youth, Sport and Recreation in Victoria, and this model could be applied to the development of other Special Interest Centres. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation in Victoria funds a number of state-wide sporting organisations that are recognised by the Sport and Recreation Council, and these funds are used for the overall benefit of sports and not for the administration of specific clubs. This principle of funding could be used as a second level of funding once a number of Special Interest/Talent Centres have been developed in a specific State. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation also funds youth organisations and here again some useful funding principles can be identified. Funding occurs at two levels. Firstly, there is a "once only" capital grant to cover building costs including renovations, restoration or new buildings. Secondly, a general grant is made available for running costs and equipment, and youth organisations may apply for this on an annual basis. Such financing principles could be extended to Special Interest Centres for recurrent funding from a central agency once they have been established. Many organisations exist in our society to service community needs and special interests, and the potential exists to assist some of these agencies so that these facilities could be utilised by students with special interests and talents. The use of sporting facilities in amateur sporting clubs and associations represents one such example, and these organisations could assist in the specialist training of talented athletes in various fields.

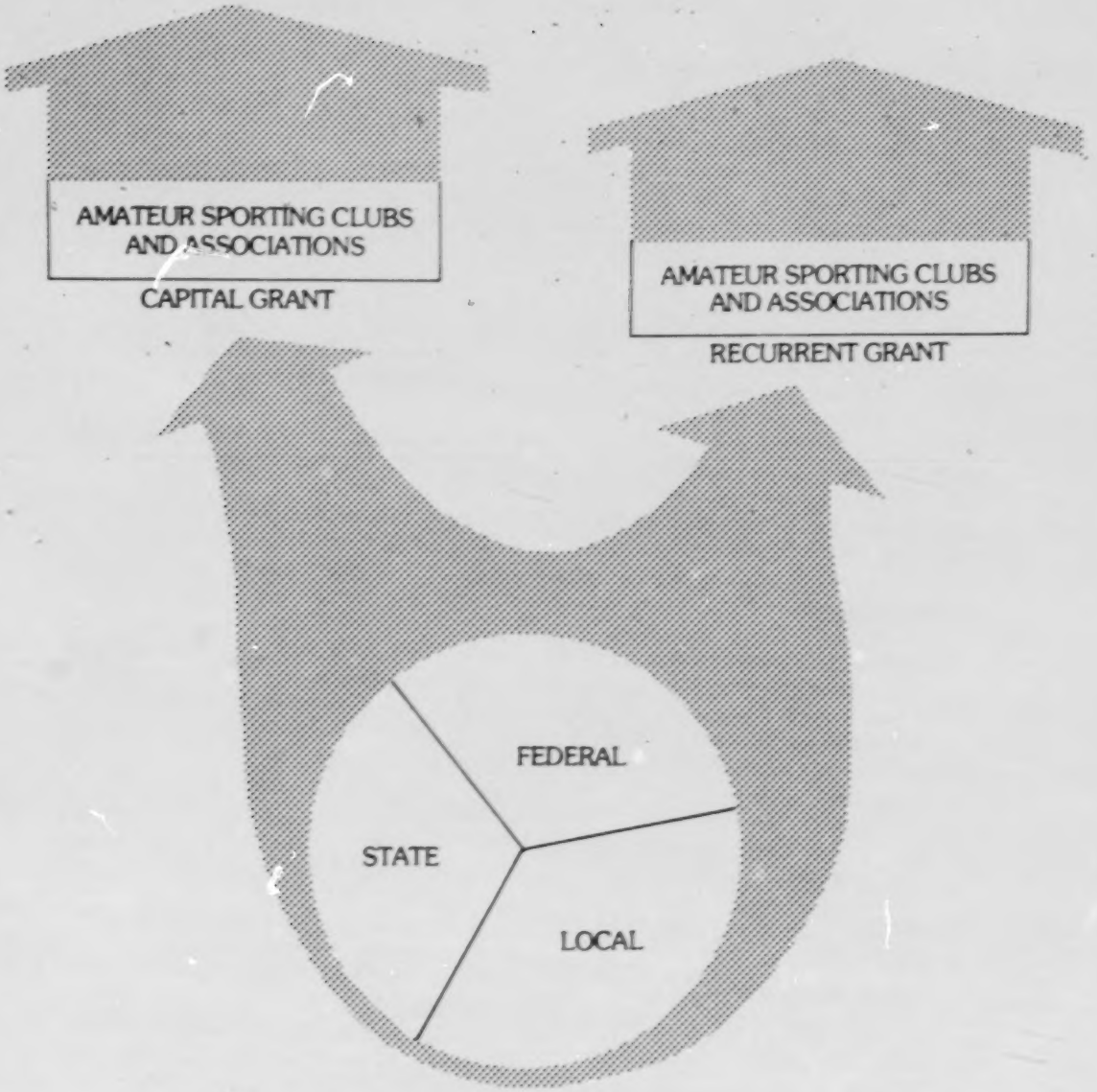


Figure 7

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

ALTERNATIVE 5: *Other Private Enterprise/Government Enterprise Co-operation to Establish Special Interest Centres.*

4.16 Increasing educational expenditures throughout the Western world are no longer perceived as a panacea for curing all social ills. Because of this decline in priority it may become necessary to consider alternative forms of funding if change and innovation are to remain important objectives within existing educational systems. Within Australia, because of the centralised State control of educational resources, few attempts have been made to establish joint ventures in education between the private and government sectors. However, the establishment of Special Interest Centres to provide enriched educational opportunities for students presents some interesting possibilities in this area.

4.17 Two major forms of private enterprise/government enterprise involvement will be discussed. The first alternative involves joint planning and administration of a Special Interest Centre between the relevant government and private enterprise organisations involved in the establishment of that centre, as presented in Figure 8. If such a model were implemented, the private company may contribute operating capital, equipment, and some administrative representation to work as part of a team in the operation of the centre.

Alternatively, the instructional responsibilities, some operating costs, and administrative personnel could be provided by the relevant educational authorities (State/Federal) to share in a joint venture. If such a centre were capital intensive, such as an electronics centre, it would seem appropriate to locate the centre conveniently in a given catchment area, so that students from various schools could attend on a withdrawal basis. On the other hand, if such a centre were to provide opportunities for a less capital intensive activity, such as modern dance, then the potential for duplicating centres in schools is increased. Obviously, if the private sector is to be encouraged to provide funds for the development of Special Interest Centres, it will be necessary to outline the respective costs and benefits that might be associated with such a venture. If, for example, a private enterprise electronics company is to be involved in a joint venture for the establishment of an electronics centre, the potential benefits to this private benefactor might include: advertising, potential consumerism, component supplier for projects, long-term company growth, and goodwill. The education system, on the other hand, has the benefit of a technological environment at lower cost in a period of limited funding, interaction with technical experts, greater access to current technological developments, and enriched educational opportunities. A similar list of costs and benefits could be outlined for alternative programs incorporated into any Special Interest Centre design.

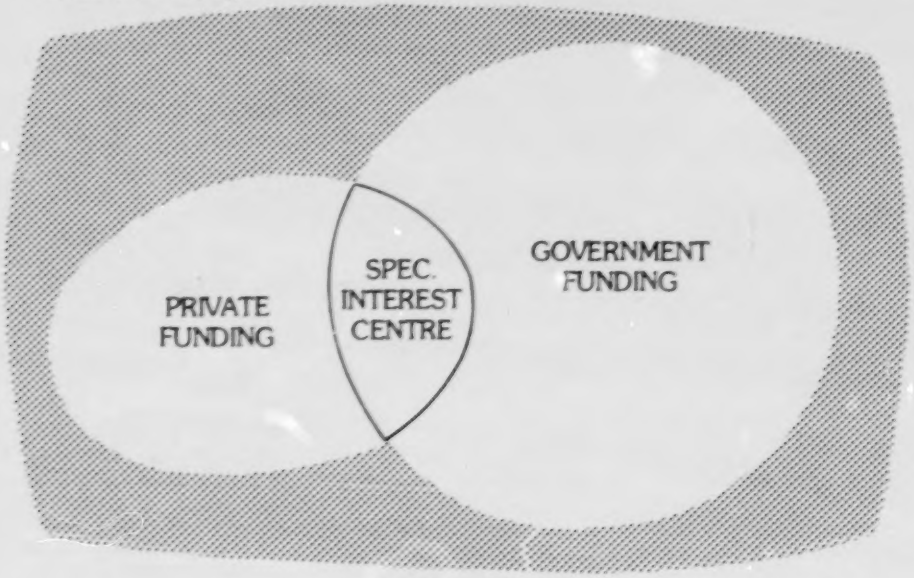


Figure 8
PRIVATE/GOVERNMENT CONSORTIUM TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRE

4.18 A second alternative for the provision of Special Interest Centres between the private and government sectors is illustrated in Figure 9. Using this approach the private enterprise company contracts to establish a Special Interest Centre through a "donation" to an existing educational system.

This type of public relations involvement could incorporate the donation of equipment and facilities to the school system, but staffing, administration and control of the centre remains as the responsibility of the school authority. A number of modifications could be made to this approach to make it more attractive to private investors. A discussion of possible funding arrangements is discussed in Chapter 7. For example, a special interest music centre could be established along the lines of the Yamaha model, where the private donor supplies the equipment, develops the centre, and trains teachers (if their "method" is acceptable to educational authorities) and all these facilities are used during the normal school day at no cost to the school. However, after the normal school day is completed, special interest classes are offered on a "paid-instructional basis" with teachers gaining market supplements through paid instruction, and any surplus can be distributed between the private company and the school on an agreed profit-sharing basis.

4.19 This procedure could also be extended into weekends and vacation periods. One major advantage of such a system is that in addition to providing facilities at no cost to the school, the cost of instruction is born by the client, rather than by the educational authority (wages and salaries). However, this cost burden can also be seen to be a major criticism of such a scheme if students from lower income groups are to attend such centres outside the normal school day.

4.20 A further private enterprise sharing model, is the Special Interest Camps approach that has been utilised by the Victorian Educational Department in co-operation with the Yamaha Music Company. Here the Rose Music Company (agent for Yamaha) provided a $25,000 grant to the Victorian Education Department to establish music camps over a 5 year period. Such facilities could be conceived as a "temporary" special interest centre and many possibilities could exist using this approach during a given school year.

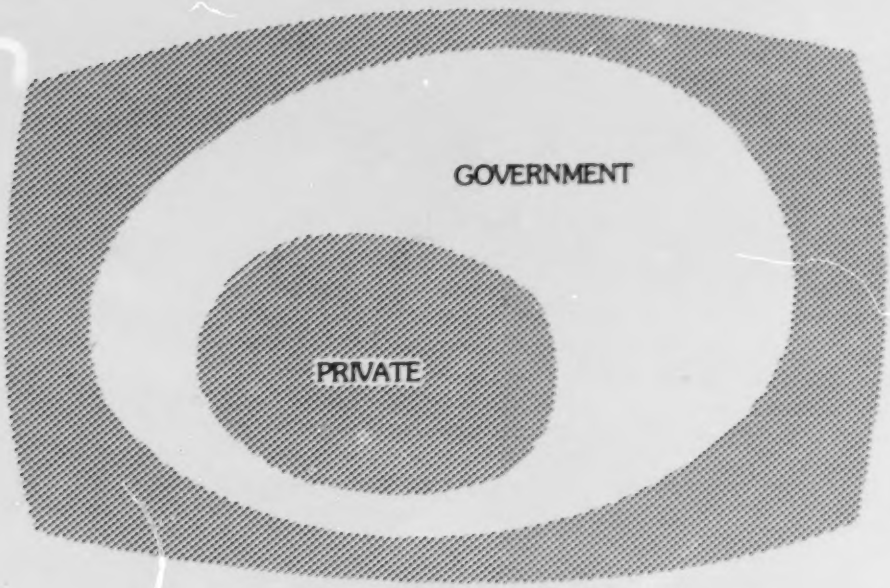


Figure 9

COMPLETE GOVERNMENT SECTOR CONTROL OF PRIVATE SECTOR OPERATION

4.21 The importance of a joint approach to the establishment of Special Interest Centres using one, or a combination of, the above models is perceived as having considerable applicability for the establishment of many special interest centres, and this approach should be investigated in considerable detail as plans for special interest education develop further. One possible application is in the field of language instruction where a special interest language centre located either "in" or "out of" school could benefit both students and migrant workers from local industries in some areas and thus costs and benefits could be shared between education authorities and local industry in such areas. Many other avenues for potential consortiums could also be investigated.

ALTERNATIVE 6: *Private Enterprise Control of Special Interest Centres.*

4.22 In addition to the joint consortium models previously outlined, it is interesting to note that in countries such as Japan "leisure centres" are being developed totally by private enterprise companies on a profit basis to develop the special talents of their respective clients. Such leisure centres may have special music complexes where clients receive paid instruction to develop their particular musical interest in a total recreation environment. This approach is depicted in Figure 10.

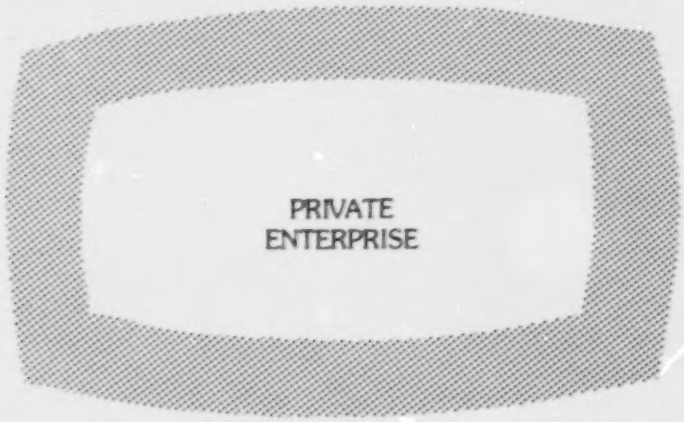


Figure 10

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE CONTROL OF SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

4.23 This list of potential organisational and funding approaches to developing Special Interest Centres is not intended to be exhaustive. Other approaches are possible, and may emerge in the future as viable alternatives. However, it is considered that these models do illustrate a variety of possibilities, and that a contingency philosophy underlies the effective development of any form of organisation. Factors such as the nature of the talent/interest, urban/rural need, as well as government/non-government school and community needs should all be considered before any particular model is developed.

PROPOSITION 7:

Many organisational approaches could be adopted to develop Special Interest Centres. Before adopting a particular approach, factors such as the nature of interest/talent, urban/rural needs, government/non-government school and community needs, as well as sources of finance should be carefully examined.

Chapter 5

STUDENT SELECTION PROCEDURES

"From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

Karl Marx

PROBLEMS OF MEASUREMENT

5. The Schools Commission (1975) believes that the resources employed in Special Interest Centres should be available to students with the strongest motivation and greatest aptitude for intensive development. Thus, it becomes necessary to measure the aptitude of students, to determine their suitability for admission to a particular program.

5.1 The process of student selection based on any criterion is extremely complex, and fraught with dangers. Perhaps one of the most frequently used measures to determine student ability is an Intelligence Quotient rating (I.Q.). For example, the term "gifted" has often erroneously been associated exclusively with a high Intelligence Quotient rating. Although there tends to be a high positive correlation between I.Q. ratings and academic achievements, many abilities that may be defined as "gifted" are not gauged by I.Q. assessment scales.
Similarly, when faced with the problem of measuring "interest", "talent" or "aptitude" for the purposes of admission to some form of Special Interest Centre, even the most sophisticated selection procedures contain considerable errors of measurement. To label a particular behaviour or skill as "talented" is to use an imprecise and indefinite term as across the vast spectrum of human abilities, it is extremely difficult to set valid and reliable minimum limits for talented performances.

IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL INTERESTS AND TALENTS

5.2 Despite the inherent difficulties associated with the measurement of interest, talent and aptitude as outlined above and because of constraints on resources, some selection procedure is essential. A considerable amount of research has been undertaken to identify attributes of interested and talented children and useful inventories have been developed by Meeker (1969), Renzulli and Hartman (1971), Florida's Resource Manual for Gifted Child Education (1973) and Reid (1976). Renzulli and Hartman's (1971) categories of talented characteristics present a summary of many attributes of talent that have been identified in the last 40 years. However, it could be argued that some skills such as psycho-motor skills have been poorly catered for, and all of these approaches have their critics.

5.3 Mooney (1976:7-9) and DeHaan (1960:501-508) discussed the problems inherent in any attempt to measure talent, and also summarised a number of methods that could be employed to isolate or identify interest, talent or potential talent in various fields. Two general approaches can be employed to identify talented children: standardised tests and systematic observation. Some abilities can best be identified by the use of objective tests; others can best be discovered through observation; and still others may need an approach combining both methods. More specifically, a summary of various identification procedures is presented below.

5.4 NOMINATIONS: This method involves key personnel in educational organisations nominating pupils whom they consider qualify as interested, talented or potentially talented in a particular field. Such nominations should reflect the educational philosophy of the school, talent definitions, and selection criteria. Such groups of proposers may include guidance counsellors, specialists, community professionals, classroom teachers, principals, administrators, self and peer group referrals. (See studies by Jacobs, 1971, Florida State Manual, 1969, Ciha et al 1974 and Pasternak et al, 1969.)

5.5 SCREENING TECHNIQUES: Checklists could be used by panels of relevant experts for screening. Such checklists could be used in any of the following areas: skills, scientific ability, physical skills. (Meeker, 1969, Bucks Country Public Schools, 1975.)

5.6 CASE HISTORIES: Ideally, a developmental case history should be available on every child. If this method is utilised the school progress of children who are nominated or identified as suitable for Special Interest Centres in the initial screening process can be investigated.

5.7 TESTING PROCEDURES. Many testing batteries, which have been used to isolate interest and talent have been identified in the literature and a large battery of tests is available for use with student groups. These include the following:

(a) Group Intelligence Tests: Of the many kinds of standardised tests now available, one of the most familiar is the standardised group intelligence test. Tests of this type are particularly valuable for the first rough screening and should be administered regularly in the school career of a child. Some school systems give group intelligence tests every three years. Gallagher (1966) noted that group intelligence tests are suitable for screening, however, they have a serious limitation in that they may not identify those with reading difficulties, emotional or motivational problems, or cultural impoverishment.

(b) Individual Intelligence Tests: Additional information concerning the intellectual level of a child may be obtained from the use of individual intelligence tests. DeHaan (1960:503) stated that:—

> *"the individual test usually gives a more reliable measure of intelligence than does a group test, and hence increases the confidence in the accuracy of the indentification procedures."*

Some schools routinely examine all candidates for "special talent" classes with an individual intelligence test. Gallagher (1966) stated that individual intelligence tests were a very effective method of identifying the talented but this method is very expensive in the use of professional time and services. Also in schools that have limited psychological and guidance services, this method is not a practical screening tool because of these limited resources.

(c) Special Aptitude Tests: Tests of specialised interests and abilities assist in the selection of pupils for some particular courses. Standard tests are available for such skills as clerical ability, mechanical aptitude, and certain types of motor aptitudes. However, DeHaan (1960:505) pointed out that:—

> *"their usefulness is much more limited in the education of gifted children than tests of intellectual abilities."*

(d) Interest Inventories: Many types of interest inventories can be used in an identification program. Source inventories inquire directly into the child's interests. Others are more indirect, using incomplete sentences for the student to finish. Further inventories ask the child to list his activities both in school and out of school, and vocational inventories are commonly used by guidance counsellors particularly for adolescent children.

(e) Standardised Achievement Tests: These are one of the most commonly used forms of educational tests. In addition to measuring achievement in reading, spelling, arithmetic, language and science, they may also be used to discover academic disabilities of talented children, and such diagnosis may provide the direction for remedial work. These procedures could be used to identify students suited for admission to Special Interest Centres for subjects such as language or mathematics. However, Gallagher (1966) stated that achievement test batteries do not identify underachieving gifted children. In addition, many of the limitations pertaining to group intelligence tests also apply to achievement test information.

(f) Personality Tests: Often personality factors are taken into account in selecting pupils and personality tests may assist in the selection of suitable students. Such tests may also yield supplementary data which can be used in counselling and guidance and in the planning of student programs.

(g) Work Samples: Many of the abilities in the fine arts area can be evaluated by a method of "work sampling". This method involves taking a sample of the student's work which is rated for excellence by a panel of expert judges. This procedure is suitable for identifying special talents in graphic arts, music, creative writing, drama, dances and mechanics.

(h) Teaching Ratings: Teacher observations and judgements may be effective in examining special interests and talents that are expressed rather consistently but not necessarily intensively. Examples of such talents are leadership and friendship which can be observed from the daily behaviour of students. Teacher ratings can be correlated with the results obtained from standardised tests to corroborate the results. DeHaan (1960:507) stated that:—

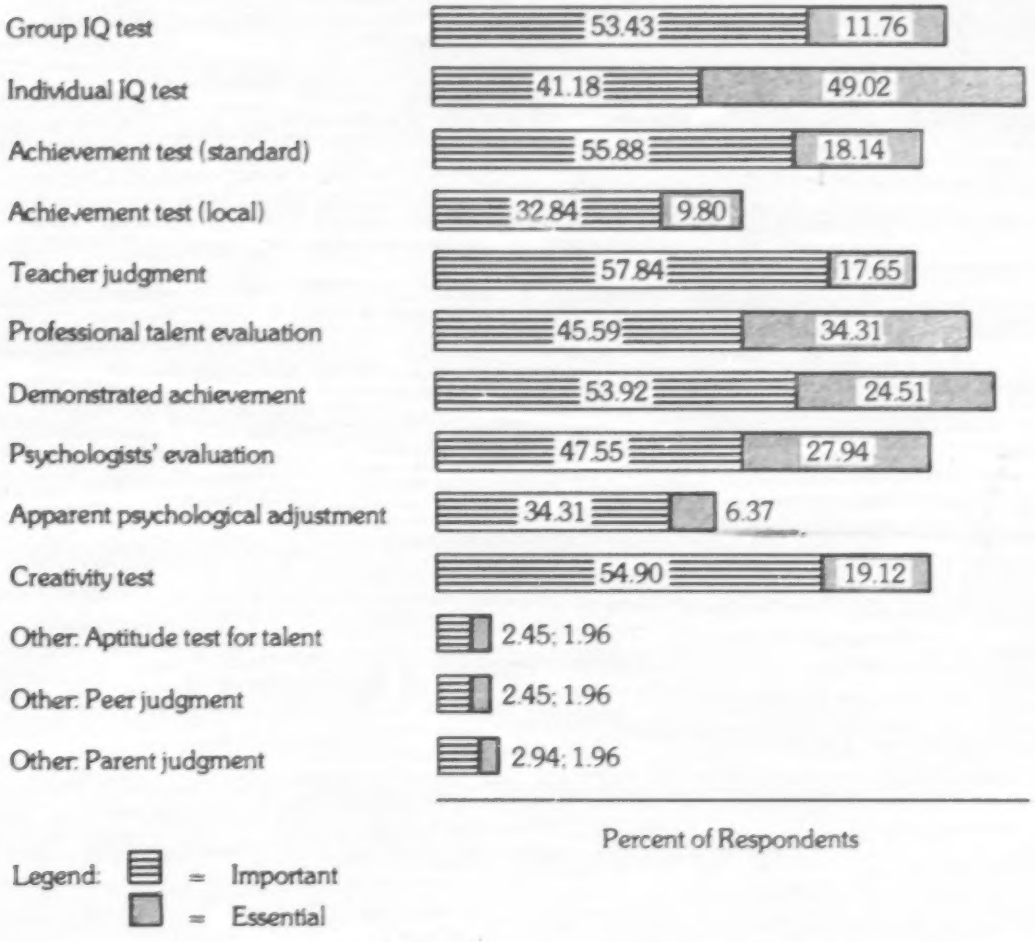
> *"more reliable results are obtained when a teacher observes many specific behaviours*

related to a given talent from when he makes a global, over-all judgement about a child's ability."

Similar observations may be undertaken by parents or peer groups to corroborate results from other data sources. Concerning teacher rating Gallagher (1966) noted that this procedure may miss children who are underachievers, continually deprived children, motivational problem children, and children displaying belligerent or apathetic attitudes toward the school program. Such results should be corroborated by standardised tests of intelligence and achievement.

(i) Creativity Tests: Gallagher (1966) emphasised that such tests are fairly recent and thus validity and reliability of many of them are uncertain. However, creativity tests assist in the identification of the divergent thinker who may be overlooked in I.Q. tests. But, such tests should be corroborated by results from other testing procedures.

5.8 A study by Turby (1975) undertook to examine expert opinion concerning the relative importance of these various selection procedures for identifying talented children. A summary of the findings of this study is presented in Figure 11.



Source: Turby, R., *Guidelines for Gifted/Talented Programmes*, Idaho, Department of Education, 1975.

Figure 11
MINIMUM CRITERIA JUDGED IMPORTANT OR ESSENTIAL FOR IDENTIFYING TALENTED CHILDREN

5.9 The previous discussion outlining various methods of identifying special talents in children is not intended to be exhaustive as other testing procedures are available. However, it does serve to illustrate the diversity of possible approaches and one particular interest or talent may be more readily identified by one selection procedure than another.
It is important to re-emphasise that all of these methods for identifying interest and talent among students have weaknesses. Furthermore, inaccuracies are more likely to be aggravated if only one source of information is used as a basis for selection. Thus, if a prescribed level of competency is to be satisfied as a condition of entrance to say a special music school, then a number of relevant sources of information should be examined to determine the suitability of any candidate for admission. The particular sources of information, or testing batteries to be used, are contingent upon the nature of the particular talent being investigated.

PROPOSITION 8:

Student selection procedures for admission to Special Interest Centres should be contingent upon the nature of the special interest or talent. Information from a number of relevant sources should provide the basis for admission to a particular field of interest.

5.10 Mooney (1976:9) emphasised the need to give special consideration to the disadvantaged elements of the community when attempting to identify students with special talents. When selecting students from low socio-economic groups, migrant/ethnic groups and racially-discriminated groups some of the following points should be noted:

(1) The child may not speak or understand the language of a list.
(2) The child may not have had the opportunity to acquire the knowledge necessary to pass the tests.
(3) The child may not have been exposed to testing situations and may not have developed test-taking strategies.
(4) The child may have a different cultural background and is penalised on intelligence tests for not having "acculturated".

These four points emphasise the problem of culture-oriented definitions of special talents, and at present there is no simple reliable method of identifying talented students in disadvantaged groups. (Smilansky et al 1973, Renzulli, 1973.)

5.11 Thus, the process of selecting students for admission to Special Interest Centres presents many problems. A further related problem concerns the skills of teaching personnel in administering and interpreting the data from such sophisticated psychological tests. It would be necessary to ensure that teacher training institutions implement courses, or add to existing courses, a curriculum that focusses upon the problems associated with the identification of children with special interests and special talents.

PROPOSITION 9:

Teacher training institutions should be encouraged to introduce programs that examine the problems associated with the identification and education of students with special interests and talents.

5.12 Much of the activity in the area of special education has been devoted to the needs of students with learning disabilities. Thus, special education programs in teacher training institutions should also focus upon students with special interests and talents, and suitable pilot courses and programs should be developed at tertiary levels so that teachers may seek career opportunities in this field.

PROPOSITION 10:

Special Education courses at tertiary institutions should include suitable pilot courses for trainee teachers, so that they may develop skills and awareness of career opportunities in the special interest field.

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Chapter 6

STAFFING AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

STAFFING SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

Staffing Problems

6. The determination of any effective staffing pattern or formula for educational needs is fraught with difficulties and constraints such as legal requirements, financial resources, school size, urban/rural location and so on. However, despite these problems it is essential that a detailed study of staffing policy and patterns be undertaken if Special Interest Centres are to function effectively and efficiently.

6.1 An examination of some existing staffing practices within Australia serves to illustrate some of the difficulties that have to be overcome if an effective staffing policy is to be achieved. At present many of the Australian States employ what may be termed a "total N" formula based on total student enrolment as a basis for staffing schools. Thus, if a special interest school is established and additional specialist staff are required for the effective functioning of that centre, then other areas of the curriculum may suffer staffing cutbacks so that this "total N" formula can be maintained. At times, some modifications are made to the total staffing needs formula, and schools are provided with itinerant part-time teachers, particularly in areas of performing and visual arts.

Some Alternative Solutions

6.2 Some attempts have been made to overcome this problem. For instance, in many areas of the creative arts, the instructional needs for students are very different from those in other areas of the traditional curriculum. Instrumental music instruction, for example, requires instruction to be provided on a "one-to-one" basis, and if standards of excellence are to be achieved, this staffing requirement is essential. To meet such an objective, a number of innovative staffing schemes have been implemented in South Australia to provide the necessary instrumental tuition. These options for students include the following:—

(a) Students may receive instrumental tuition from the instructional staff (permanent and/or itinerant) within the special music school;

OR

(b) Students may continue their instruction from the Conservatorium of Music, the Adelaide College of Further Education or with a private music instructor, and an allowance is provided to cover the cost of the fees.

These options available to students to continue music instruction outside the school provide certain advantages in the field of music education. Music education has a well-established background in many educational systems and a number of avenues have traditionally been available for training music students. Many private instructors have built up a considerable amount of goodwill with their student clients and the flexibility built into this staffing model permits the continuity of this goodwill and the benefits derived from such an instructional relationship.

6.3 Alternatively, instead of students receiving instruction outside the school, a further option involves the employment of "potential teachers" from within the community who have relevant expertise in certain areas of the creative arts. Again, in South Australia provision has been made to utilise some of this "potential" teaching talent, where the Teachers' Registration Board may give restricted registration in aesthetic and recreation subjects to people without formal teaching qualifications, who then teach solely within this specific field. Although these examples are drawn from the creative arts areas, similar applications can readily be envisaged in areas such as languages, sports coaching and electronics.

6.4 It should be pointed out that this latter alternative may present a number of problems. First, it needs to be recognised that talented and experienced musicians may not be readily available in all communities, and not all skilled musicians are necessarily effective teachers. Secondly it is essential that schools have the funds available to employ such part-time teaching assistants, and thus some form of school-based funding for these purposes appears essential. The employment of teacher aides in schools does present a precedent that could be investigated and expanded for these purposes. Thirdly, various teacher associations and unions must be prepared to support a

system of restricted registration, and fourthly, parental support is also necessary if such a system is to be successful. At the school level further problems may emerge if short-term demands of itinerant staff for timetable changes conflict with the timetable arrangements of full-time staff members. Such seconded staff members may not identify with the long term interest of the organisation in the same way that permanent professional staff do.

6.5 It is important to emphasise that the staffing demands for various special interests and talents vary considerably. The "one-to-one" relationship that is important for successful instrumental music tuition is not essential for areas such as dance instruction. In addition, in the field of dance education there has not been in Australia a long standing tradition of training institutions and thus there is a shortage of qualified teaching personnel available both within the schools and the community. In most Australian States, dance education is included as part of physical education qualifications. However, if special dance schools are to be established and excellence is to be a major goal of the organisation, the need for highly qualified experts is imperative. Thus, it may become necessary to change the nature of dance education in tertiary institutions, and new dance centres, such as the programs offered by the Victorian College of the Arts may become the major avenue through which dance education teachers obtain teaching credentials. So also, a reappraisal of teacher training programs in dance education to cover areas such as classical ballet, jazz ballet, folkloric dance, and modern dance is considered essential if special interest dance schools are to be staffed effectively in the long term. In the short term, dance teachers from local communities could be given "temporary registration" to assist in the provision of dance education if such people were prepared to offer their services to schools.

6.6 Additional staff may be available from other agencies on a temporary basis to assist in Special Interest Centres. Such agencies may include government Ministries, (e.g. Ministry of the Arts, and the Ministry of Conservation), that frequently have an educational commitment written directly or indirectly into the Acts establishing these organisations. Many of these organisations are attempting to establish links with educational institutions so that they can receive staffing assistance from schools. The potential should therefore be examined for any such agreements to be reciprocal if both organisations could benefit educationally from such an exchange. Thus, the development of a "staffing exchange" on a short term basis may be feasible, although such a structure may meet resistance from both sides if they both consider their respective organisations to be understaffed.

Should such a staffing exchange be developed, the co-ordination and administration of such a system could be undertaken at the regional office level as some Ministries, such as the Victorian Ministry for Conservation, have a series of regional offices for administrative purposes. The role of Regional Offices in staffing matters varies considerably from State to State. However, staffing needs for Special Interest Centres may best be handled at the regional level because of the need for close liaison with these centres.

6.7 A further problem arises in the nature of staffing hierarchies in Australian schools. Most Australian schools are organised in subject departments, with subject co-ordinators as level managers. In many of the Special Interest Schools in South Australia for example, a senior administrative officer with relevant expertise in a given field is appointed to each special school to facilitate the effective functioning of the centre. However, in traditional secondary schools in Australia, there is a paucity of middle level administrators in the arts areas.

PROPOSITION 11:

Where a staffing formula is based on total student enrolments, modifications should be made to adjust for the instructional needs of students with special interests and talents.

PROPOSITION 12:

The concept of "restricted registration" should be considered if members of the community without formal teaching qualifications have experience and abilities that would contribute to an enriched learning environment for a particular special interest or talent.

PROPOSITION 13:

The potential for a short term staffing exchange should be investigated where government or non-government agencies have demonstrated an educational commitment relevant to a particular interest or talent.

CONTROL STRUCTURES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

State Level

6.8 A number of alternative administrative structures are feasible for the control and co-ordination of Special Interest Centres at the State level. Several approaches can be found in the various Australian States and each of these will be considered.

6.9 One form of control structure places a Special Interest Centre under the guidance of a relevant tertiary institution. For example, it is proposed that the Victorian College of the Arts Technical School will have certain control functions administered by the Victorian College of the Arts. An Education Department principal has been appointed to this school, and in the initial stages the college council will function temporarily as a School Council. At a later stage a School Council will be established and this Council will have representation from the College Council. The College will exercise control over many aspects of school administration including selection of students, employment of professional staff, curriculum, assessment and a tertiary orientation program. This approach for the control of special interest centres has the following advantages:—

(1) It permits the development of an integrated educational program with the transition from secondary to tertiary education becoming an integral part of all planning procedures.

(2) It permits flexible utilisation of staffing specialists, and also enables continuing instruction into tertiary education by the same subject specialist where necessary, e.g. instrumental music.

(3) It has certain cost effective advantages arising from the spreading of overhead costs, because many facilities are now provided on a shared-used basis between secondary and tertiary students.

(4) Secondary music students have access to specialised educational facilities, such as places in the college orchestra.

(5) This particular environment enables further specialisation within the general education program. For example, language courses may emphasise language for musicians.

6.10 However, the incorporation of a relevant tertiary organisation in the control processes of a Special Interest Centre has presented some problems, as indicated in the recent New South Wales report on Gifted Children (1977:71-72). When considering the joint administration of the Conservatorium High School in New South Wales it was stated that:—

"There is undue influence on the organisation of the school by the tertiary section of the Conservatorium of Music.

Under the tertiary influence too great an emphasis is placed on performance, thus not catering for all aspects of talent in music."

A further criticism in the New South Wales Report (1977:7) focussed upon the limitations of locating a Special Interest Centre on the same site as a tertiary institution for control purposes.

"Because of its very restricted accommodation, the pupils are denied a number of educational experiences and facilities which the Committee considers should be available to pupils in all secondary schools. These include adequate playground areas, some sporting facilities, suitable specialist rooms and adequate library accommodation".

However, some of these criticisms are based on the assumption that tertiary control of Special Interest Centres is not acceptable in New South Wales, whereas in other States such a control model may be acceptable. Although this report recommended that the present location and organisation of the Conservatorium High School be abandoned, some advantages of this tertiary linkage model were emphasised (1977:72):

"The need for easy access to the services of high quality specialised music staff was recognised.

The desirability of viable groups and facilities for corporate music performance was also recognised."

6.11 A second model puts all control under State administration by placing Special Interest Centres under the jurisdiction of existing education department offices.

The only involvement of tertiary or other institutions may be in preliminary committees to develop guidelines, and perhaps in the assessment procedures through organisations such as the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board (V.U.S.E.B. – which is currently being phased out and replaced by the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education – V.I.S.E.). Thus, a centralised

department of education is responsible for most areas of special interest centre administration including funding, staffing, curriculum development and planning.

6.12 With the increasing development of a regional education system in most Australian States the potential exists for greater regional control of many administrative functions of Special Interest Centres. There is potential for centrally-initiated planning which may be adapted to priorities as determined at regional levels. Regional Offices could assist in the location of Special Interest Centres, with information on student catchment areas, commuting patterns, income and occupational levels of parents and so on. Similarly, curriculum guidelines may be developed at central office level and provided to regional offices where they may be adapted to local needs.

6.13 It is important to emphasise that the involvement of regional offices in the control of Special Interest Centres may also present certain difficulties. Although regional offices may have greater sensitivity to the needs of their region, the catchment area for many such centres may extend beyond both regional and State boundaries. For example, the Special Music schools in South Australia advertise across South Australia (and other States) to attract students to their special centres. Thus, the complete regionalisation of control of Special Interest Centres could cause some difficulties in administration for these centres.

6.14 A further possibility involves the creation of a combined panel of members from both community organisations and the Education Department within a particular State as a board of management.

6.15 Various combinations of centralised/decentralised control and decision-making are possible in all areas of education administration. It is suggested that Special Interest Centres might initially be centrally controlled to enable more effective development in the early stages. (Regional Offices may not at the outset, have the resources and specialised staff necessary for this gestation period.) However, it is hoped that, given time, regional administration would play a larger role in the administration of such centres.

Federal Level

6.16 It is envisaged that the development of Special Interest Centres will involve resources obtained from both State and Federal levels. A number of arguments can be outlined to illustrate the need for some national co-ordinating authority to oversee the development of special interest centres:

(a) If funding is allocated across Australia to assist in the development of Special Interest Centres, provision could be made to establish an information and evaluation exchange for the planning, development and implementation stages of such centres.

(b) Because of the constraints on resources many Special Interest Centres may have student catchment areas that extend across regional and State boundaries. Thus, it would be desirable to make provision for the overall planning and co-ordination of such centres.

(c) There is the possibility that too much emphasis may have been placed on one or more special interests, and greater national co-ordination and planning of Special Interest Centres may help promote more effective use of resources.

6.17 A further important need for the administration of Special Interest Centres is the establishment of an "information service" to disseminate current materials and describe innovative special projects in detail. Many schools in Australia are unaware of innovations being undertaken in their own State, let alone other Australian States. One effect is that some innovative schemes could be greatly improved if information from other projects were regularly available. Because of funding constraints it is essential that Special Interest Centres be as cost effective as possible and investments undertaken should utilise the expertise available from projects undertaken in similar areas. Rather than create a new central agency to undertake this task, existing centres such as the Curriculum Development Centre or the Schools Commission could make such information available to Special Interest Centres on a regular basis.

6.18 Secondary and tertiary institutions, National Associations such as the Australian Institute of Music Teachers (pending 1978), and the various State level associations, such as the Victorian Music Teachers Association, should all be encouraged to contribute current information on innovations to such an "information service" so that it can communicate this data to the school level.

PROPOSITION 14:

Appropriate mechanisms should be established at the Federal and State/Regional levels to undertake the planning and administration of Special Interest Centres.

PROPOSITION 15:

Wherever possible existing structures such as the Schools Commission, Curriculum

Development Centre and State Departments of Education should undertake co-ordinating responsibility for Special Interest Centres.

PROPOSITION 16:

In the long run, once such centres are established, control might pass to the regional levels.

Chapter 7

FUNDING SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

SOURCES OF FUNDING

7. Many educational innovations, irrespective of their merit, have a limited life because of inadequate planning for a sound, long term financial basis. If Special Interest Centres are to be established, and standards of excellence are to be pursued, then a secure financial commitment from one or more agencies is essential from the outset.

7.1 Dependency on one agency for funding over the long term for innovatory projects may also present problems. If funding from one agency is withdrawn for any reason, then an entire project may collapse very quickly. This may be particularly relevant if a project is funded within a State, by the Commonwealth, without any commitment from a relevant State organisation. Thus, a more secure financial basis is established if an organisation, such as a State Education Department is to be committed to such a project from its inception. In some States, innovations have been funded by Commonwealth agencies, and when continuing finance was not available, the projects have collapsed because State agencies have not been prepared to take over the financing.

7.2 Further problems arise in the allocation of Commonwealth funding to State agencies. In some instances funds that are granted for particular projects are included in a "consolidated revenue" fund and expenditure is then reallocated at the State level. If Commonwealth funding is to assist in the development of Special Interest Centres it would be more effective if grants were provided so that funds were specifically allocated to a particular special interest project.

7.3 In addition to Commonwealth and State Education Departments, other funding agencies may be prepared to contribute funds to the establishment of Special Interest Centres. As outlined previously, many government and semi-government departments have an educational commitment written into their acts, and such provision may represent a potential source of funds for Special Interest Centres. For example, the financial arrangements for the establishment of the Kew Music Centre in Victoria (1977) were as follows:

Education Department Victoria (Primary)	$15,000
Kew Municipal Council	$40,000
St. Anne's Catholic School	$20,000
State Ministry of the Arts	$35,000
Residual Funding:	
– Schools Commission (pending approval)	$20,000
– Loan	$10,000
	$140,000

Examples of joint funding can be found in all States, and a variety of cost sharing formulae have been established for various projects.

7.4 The potential for private enterprise consortium funding was discussed in Chapter 3. However, to obtain private enterprise support for educational projects is difficult, and often private funds will only be contributed on a joint funding basis. Such funding also often tends to be of minor importance to the recipient because of its "last resort" nature. Thus, private finance may be extremely helpful as a source of "pump-priming funding", but because of the uncertain nature of such funds, they may need to play a residual role in project finance.

PROPOSITION 17:

A firm, long-term financial commitment from State Departments is an essential prerequisite for the development of any Special Interest Centre within State systems.

PROPOSITION 18:

Private funding outside government agencies could be investigated as a potential source of "pump priming" revenue. However, such funding may play a residual role in project finance because of its uncertain nature.

Levels of Funding

7.5 Funding for the development of Special Interest Centres can be undertaken at a number of levels. At the broadest level it would be possible to allocate funds to State-wide organisations who utilise

them for the overall benefit of an activity, rather than supporting one individual special interest organisation. For example, if Special Interest Sports Centres were developed providing specialised training for athletes and sportsmen/women, then within States such as in Victoria, a number of State-wide organisations could receive financial assistance to support the overall development of such activities. Within the State of Victoria, such State-wide organisations may include the Victorian State Schools Sports Association, the Metropolitan High School Sports Association and the Metropolitan Technical School Sports Association. Funds could be used to provide relevant competitive experiences and opportunities for athletes with exceptional talents. There are many other State-wide agencies within Victoria that may play a role in the development of special interest education. For example, the Gould League and the Victorian State Horticultural Society may contribute to activities and experiences in the area of environmental education if a Special Interest Centre were developed with this purpose in mind. The functions of some of these abovementioned organisations were outlined in the Victorian Curriculum Services Enquiry Report (1977:135) where it was stated:

> *"All of these associations have curriculum service functions. The three Sports Associations are each involved in the organisation and control of interschool sport and of interstate school sport. The Gould League develops, publishes, sells and distributes information and resource materials and provides advisory services and some in-service activities for teachers. The Victorian State Schools' Horticultural Society advises teachers on all matters pertaining to horticulture, and assists in the planning and improvement of school grounds."*

If such State-wide organisations were involved with the provision of suitable experiences and opportunities for special interest students, then not only would there be immediate benefit to the students, but also the problems of student catchment and publicity for Special Interest Centres may be overcome to some extent.

7.6 A second level of funding involves support for particular organisational innovations that are designed to provide enriched learning experiences for students with special interests and talents. Many institutions and innovative approaches to special interest education would fall within this category. For example, if some form of decentralised school campus model were attempted, along the lines suggested for an environmental studies Special Interest Centre, then a number of institutions offering curriculum services in the community may need funding if such an enriched environment is seen as essential to promote standards of excellence. At present in Victoria, and in other States, education services are provided to teachers and schools at a number of institutions which hold collections of various kinds and which are open to the public. For example, in Victoria these institutions include the Ballarat Fine Arts Gallery, Ballarat Historical Park Association (Sovereign Hill), Benalla Fine Arts Gallery, Bendigo Gallery of Fine Arts, La Trobe Valley Arts Centre, Melbourne Zoological Gardens, Mildura Arts Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Science Museum of Victoria, Sir Colin Mackenzie Fauna Park and Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement. These services are established to assist schools and teachers to make more effective use of the resources of these facilities and to enable these institutions to fulfil their education function.

The recent Victorian Curriculum Services Enquiry Report (1977:138) noted:

> *"These general objectives are achieved in two ways: first by conducting activities with visiting groups of children and their teachers, either in relation to set topics or in relation to topics specially prepared to meet the needs of individual visiting groups; secondly, by providing advice to teachers and schools about the museum and its education service in general and, more specifically, about how to use the museum's resources. The last service involves the preparation and production of publicity materials and of materials containing information and suggestions for activities related to particular aspects of the museum."*

Thus, many attempts to provide enriched opportunities to develop the abilities of students with special interests and talents may involve extensive rationalisation and use of community resources. If such facilities are to be used as an integral part of special interest education, then it is essential that resources are made available at the Special Interest Centre level for funding such activities.

> *PROPOSITION 19:*
> *Some funds should be made available to State-wide educational organisations, to provide challenges for students with special abilities, and to promote the activities of Special Interest Centres.*

PROPOSITION 20:

In addition to providing funds for capital expenditures associated with Special Interest Centres, a further pool of funds should be available for centre-based funding for a variety of learning experiences within the community.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY OF PROPOSITIONS

The following propositions were developed from this feasibility study and have been extracted from the previous chapters and presented in total.

INTRODUCTION

PROPOSITION 1:
Special provision should be made within the various State Education systems to provide opportunities for students with special interests and special talents. Such provision may involve the development of new facilities or the rationalisation of existing facilities.

THE NEED TO DEVELOP SPECIAL INTERESTS AND TALENTS

PROPOSITION 2:
Interests and talents exist in all fields of endeavour. This broad philosophy should provide the basis for determining priorities in the development of Special Interest Centres at central State and regional levels.

PROPOSITION 3:
Institutions that do not have specialist staff and facilities to develop special interests and talents may serve as catchment areas for the identification of students with such abilities.

PROPOSITION 4:
Guidelines should be developed at the State level to assist teachers in the identification of children with special interests and talents in various fields.

PROPOSITION 5:
Within the area of special interests there is an urgent need to provide challenges for students with abilities in the visual and performing arts. If such interests and talents are to mature, such provision cannot be left until students enter tertiary education.

A SURVEY OF EXISTING SPECIAL INTEREST FACILITIES

PROPOSITION 6:
It is imperative that any new developments in the area of special interest education should be based on knowledge derived from a comprehensive examination of current theory and practice in any given area.

FORMS OF ORGANISATION FOR SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

PROPOSITION 7:
Many organisational approaches could be adopted to develop Special Interest Centres. Before adopting a particular approach, factors such as the nature of interest/talent, urban/rural needs, government/non-government school, and community needs, as well as sources of finance should be carefully examined.

STUDENT SELECTION PROCEDURES

PROPOSITION 8:
Student selection procedures for admission to Special Interest Centres should be contingent upon the nature of the special interest or talent. Information from a number of relevant sources should provide the basis for admission to a particular field of interest.

PROPOSITION 9:
Teacher training institutions should be encouraged to introduce programs that examine the problems associated with the identification and education of students with special interests and talents.

PROPOSITION 10:

Special education courses at tertiary institutions should include suitable pilot courses for trainee teachers so that they may develop skills and awareness of career opportunities in the special interest field.

STAFFING AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

PROPOSITION 11:

Where a staffing formula is based on total student enrolments, modifications should be made to adjust for the instructional needs of students with special interests and talents.

PROPOSITION 12:

The concept of "restricted registration" should be considered if members of the community, without formal teaching qualifications have experience and abilities that would contribute to an enriched learning environment for a particular special interest or talent.

PROPOSITION 13:

The potential for a short term staffing exchange should be investigated where government or non-government agencies have demonstrated an educational commitment relevant to a particular interest or talent.

PROPOSITION 14:

Appropriate mechanisms should be established at Federal and State/Regional levels to undertake the planning and administration of Special Interest Centres.

PROPOSITION 15:

Wherever possible, existing structures such as the Schools Commission, Curriculum Development Centre and State Departments of Education should undertake co-ordinating responsibility for Special Interest Centres.

PROPOSITION 16:

In the long run, once such centres are established, control might pass to the regional levels.

FUNDING SPECIAL INTEREST CENTRES

PROPOSITION 17:

A firm, long term financial commitment from State Education Departments, is an essential pre-requisite for the development of any Special Interest Centre within State systems.

PROPOSITION 18:

Private funding outside of government agencies could be investigated as a potential source of "pump priming" revenue. However, such funding may play a residual role in project finance because of its uncertain nature.

PROPOSITION 19:

Some funds should be made available to State-wide educational organisations to provide challenges for students with special abilities and to promote the activities of Special Interest Centres.

PROPOSITION 20:

In addition to providing funds for capital expenditures associated with Special Interest Centres, a further pool of funds should be available for centre-based funding for a variety of learning experiences within the community.